

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL Monterey, California



THESIS

**COOPERATIVE SECURITY IN NORTHEAST ASIA:
RAMIFICATIONS OF CHANGE IN THE U.S. AND ROK
MARITIME STRATEGIES**

by

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September 2002

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CHANGE IN THE U.S. AND ROK MARITIME STRATEGIES**

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ABSTRACT

Since the end of World War II, stability in Northeast Asia has been a key goal of the United States. Maintaining a balance of power in this maritime theater has proven important for regional stability and global economic growth. The modernization of the South Korean Navy and its changing maritime strategy will have ramifications for the U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK) relationship in the future. In the current world situation, changing regional threats will require new approaches to maintaining future stability. The United States and South Korea must work together toward achieving stronger bilateral and multilateral relationships with other principal actors in the region to achieve this goal. The purpose of this thesis is to review the changing strategies of the United States and South Korean Navies in Northeast Asia and to examine the ramifications should a more cooperative maritime alliance structure be utilized in the future. It is relevant because the United States has played a vital role in the security of the Korean peninsula since the end of World War II, and because decisions made by South Korea regarding security matters affect the United States and its interests in the region.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States historically has had a strong maritime tradition in the Asia-Pacific. Developing in stages since the founding of the United States, the relationship between the United States and countries in the Asia-Pacific region has seen periods of territorial expansion, conflict, containment, and engagement. The U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet's involvement in the region has focused on maintaining stability through a balance of power to foster economic growth.

The immense size and cultural differences within the Asia-Pacific region require U.S. interests to cover a wide spectrum of issues. Supporting policies in Northeast Asia which ensure security, honor commitments between allies and friends, and contribute to economic growth are the focus of U.S. national interests in the region.

The U.S. strategy supports these interests by assuring allies and friends, dissuading adversaries, deterring aggression and coercion, and when necessary decisively defeating opponents. The strategy of engagement provides the United States the ability to create a foundation of security that allows for economic growth. The United States counters regional threats through reinforcing U.S. alliances with South Korea and Japan, maintaining a U.S. forward based presence, and developing multilateral regional institutions.

The peoples that inhabited the Korean peninsula have historically had mixed maritime successes. While vulnerable to water invasion from the three sides of the peninsula, the early inhabitants of Korea focused their fortifications more heavily on the threat of land invaders from the north. Admiral Yi Sun-shin, the great figure of Korean naval history, repelled the Japanese invasions of the peninsula in the 1590's due to his invention of the first iron clad warship.

Korea was able to remain isolated from the outside world until the late nineteenth century. Foreign intervention and armed conflict resulted in Japanese dominance over the peninsula which lasted from its annexation in 1910 through the end of WWII. Following World War II, the fight to gain influence and power over the Korean peninsula erupted in the Korean War. Since the signing of the armistice in Korea, the ROK Navy

has focused primarily on coastal defense capabilities. The ROK Navy has predominantly designed its naval force structure to complement the ROK Army and U.S. forces in defense against the North. Naval clashes in the Yellow (West) Sea in June 1999, and again in June 2002 demonstrate the necessity for this capability. As Korea looks towards the future, this strategy is changing as it redirects its outlook to a more regional security focus.

South Korea, as a modern member of the Northeast Asian community, finds itself in a maritime environment that is rapidly changing. Shifting beyond a coastal to a regional mindset, South Korean interests are changing from an inward defensive focus to one which incorporates global economic opportunities. South Korea's changing interests and the recognition of the importance of sea lines of communication for trade and security purposes have increased the need for naval capabilities.

South Korea is developing its role as a regional power. The ROK Navy is rapidly expanding and becoming increasingly sophisticated. Through modernization programs focusing on its destroyer and submarine fleets, South Korea is becoming a well-balanced, blue water naval force.

Several common themes emerge when assessing U.S. regional concerns and opportunities for cooperation in Northeast Asia. U.S.-ROK concerns focus on ensuring stability in the region for the indefinite future. This stability has historically been a product of successful bilateral security alliances with Japan and South Korea. As the unification process on the Korean peninsula progresses it is likely that the maritime component of the U.S.-ROK alliance will play a greater role.

Through a naval cooperative security framework, the United States can maintain its presence and strengthen its ties with its current allies and friends in the region. Each country in Northeast Asia could benefit from this arrangement. As the DPRK continues to reform its economy and open itself to the international community, its role in a cooperative security organization will ease tensions in the area. Two significant concerns between the ROK and Japan center on Japanese interpretations of history and the effect a strong unified Korean economy could have on a troubled Japanese economy. Previous

joint humanitarian maritime operations are a starting point for developing a cooperative security framework.

Chinese and Russian common economic and military interests affect all of the regional powers in Northeast Asia. It is important to plan for the eventual inclusion of China and Russia in a cooperative security framework. A security agreement working to prevent conflict versus one that prepares for conflict would benefit all of the actors in the region.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. OVERVIEW

Since the end of World War II, stability in Northeast Asia has been a key goal of the United States. Maintaining a balance of power in this maritime theater has proven important for regional stability and global economic growth. The U.S. Pacific Fleet, working in cooperation with allies and friends in the region, has played a significant role in achieving these goals.

The modernization of the South Korean navy and its changing maritime strategy will have ramifications for the U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK) relationship in the future. In the current world situation, changing regional threats will require new approaches to maintaining future stability. The United States and South Korea must work together toward achieving stronger bilateral and multilateral relationships with other principal actors in the region to achieve this goal.

The purpose of this thesis is to review the changing strategies of the United States and South Korean Navies in Northeast Asia and to examine the ramifications should a more cooperative maritime alliance structure be utilized in the future. The thesis is relevant because the United States has played a vital role in the security of the Korean peninsula since the end of World War II and because decisions made by South Korea regarding security matters affect the United States and its interests in the region.

While it is important to interpret history in order to predict the future, this thesis will attempt to look forward, rather than back. The intent is to analyze and clarify the patterns for the future instead of merely reporting the past. The specific objective is to provide answers to these primary questions:

- How will South Korea's naval modernization program and changing naval strategy affect the U.S. strategy and interests in Northeast Asia?
- How has the U.S.-ROK alliance changed over time from a maritime perspective, and how will the U.S.-ROK alliance be affected by impending changes?
- How will the changes in U.S.-ROK strategy affect regional security?

The overarching hypothesis with regard to this set of questions is that to ensure continued stability in Northeast Asia, the United States and the ROK must embrace a cooperative relationship with other actors in the region. Both countries must work toward stronger bilateral and multilateral relationships to prevent a disruption of the balance of power in the region.

B. STRUCTURE OF THESIS

Chapters II and III examine the maritime history of the United States and the Republic of Korea in a chronological context. Maritime interests and strategic policies are studied and several themes emerge. Chapter IV expands on these themes and explores their implications on U.S. and ROK future relations with other countries in Northeast Asia.

Chapter II examines the evolution of U.S. strategic interests in Northeast Asia and reviews the current U.S. strategy. It reviews the U.S. role as a historically strong maritime power and as a maritime leader in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, the growing U.S. strategic interests in Northeast Asia are examined. The current U.S. strategy in Northeast Asia, of engagement and countering regional threats, is assessed.

Chapter III reviews South Korea's maritime strategy, looking at the past, present, and future. It reviews the history of South Korea's maritime role in Northeast Asia and its current strategic interests, and it details the Republic of Korea's current strategy as well as its force structure. The latter section examines the short term and long term goals according to the ROK's most recent white paper. The final segment also examines how this strategy is accomplished through its current policies.

Chapter IV explores the implications for the United States. It begins by assessing what changes have occurred between the United States and South Korea and then estimates what changes may occur in the future. Special attention is paid to U.S. priorities in the region and how South Korean maritime plans may affect those priorities. In the following sections, this chapter looks at areas of concern and opportunities for cooperation with other Northeast Asian countries, including North Korea, Japan, China, and Russia.

Chapter V provides a conclusion. In a summary format, it reviews the status of American and South Korean maritime strategies in Northeast Asia. It offers future scenarios of the possibilities that may lay ahead and assesses courses of action that would be in the United States' best interest.

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II. THE EVOLUTION OF UNITED STATES STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN NORTHEAST ASIA AND CURRENT STRATEGY

A. MARITIME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history of the United States and its involvement in the Asia-Pacific region developed in multiple stages since the American colonies were in their infancy. Burgeoning trade opportunities with Pacific Rim countries and westward expansion were significant motivators for expanding the American role in the area. The U.S. “obsession with China’s apparent opportunities led to the acquisition of Alaska, Hawaii, and the Philippines, a big navy, the Open Door policy, the construction of the Panama Canal, and a dangerous antagonism to Japan’s own imperial dreams.”¹

Merchants, trappers, and fisherman were all lured by the vast economic opportunities the Pacific region offered. U.S. foreign relations in the 1850s were centered on the spice trade, the impact of the British role in the Opium War, and the resulting unequal treaties that opened the door to China. Whalers and seafaring merchants inevitably called on the United States Navy to protect their regional interests.

The U.S. naval presence in the Pacific theater, since the early 1800s, provided the foundation of security that allowed for commerce to prosper in the region. Clearly, “the United States is a maritime nation. As such, our nation’s success and its maritime security always have been inextricably linked.”² Maintaining stability in the region and ensuring the security of trade has been in the best interests of all the actors involved.

American expansion pushed westward from the newly independent colonies rapidly towards the Pacific. The U.S. claim to the Pacific Northwest began in 1792, when Boston mariner, Robert Gray reached the Columbia River inlet.³ Later in 1803,

¹ Arthur Power Dudden, *The American Pacific: From the Old China Trade to the Present* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 1992), viii.

² Navy Department, Office of Naval Intelligence, *Worldwide Maritime Challenges, 1997* (Washington, DC: GPO 1997), i.

³ Han W. Hannau, *USA* (Springfield, MA: G. and C. Merriam Company 1972), 19.

during the Jefferson Administration, the purchase of the Louisiana Territory doubled the size of the United States.

The peace which followed the War of 1812, was accompanied by further territorial expansion. As settlers moved into Mexican held territories in the Southwest, colliding interests foreshadowed a conflict. The war with Mexico beginning in 1846, ended in a U.S. victory which was rewarded with the land that makes up parts of present day California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico.

During the 1840s, Pacific Northwest development also increased, as settlers headed out along the Oregon Trail from Independence, Missouri to the mouth of the Columbia River. The Californian gold rush of 1849 brought many Americans to the west. Manifest destiny was running its course, and by 1850 California was admitted as the thirty-first state. The United States had become bi-coastal and its future outlook was directed towards the Pacific.

During the initial stages of American involvement in the Pacific Rim, the history of U.S. naval personnel serving as explorers and ambassadors is important to note. U.S. Navy Commodore Matthew Perry opened Japan with the signing of the Treaty of Kanagawa in 1854. The treaty outlined procedures which provided protection for U.S. sailors seeking refuge and opened coal and provisioning ports in Shimoda and Hakodate.⁴

The next significant stage of development in the relationship between the United States and the Asia-Pacific was the purchase of Alaska in 1867. Russia's exchange of the territory for \$7.2 million in gold from the United States was based on four main assumptions. First was Russian recognition of the United States' manifest destiny outlook. Russians feared the eventual loss of the land and preferred to benefit from the sale to avoid the possibility of its loss in the future. Second was the need for money in the Russian national treasury. The Crimean War against Britain and France and the railroad projects in which Russia was involved were extremely expensive. The third assumption was that following the sale, the United States would befriend Russia against Britain and support Russian expansion in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The final

⁴ Dudden, 19.

consideration was that by eliminating the burden of the unprofitable territory, Russia could more easily focus on its interests in Central and Northeast Asia.⁵ Russia's conclusions proved to be exceedingly off the mark. The discovery of gold and various other precious metals before the end of the nineteenth century and the discovery of oil in the mid twentieth century, not to mention the strategic importance of the state during the Cold War, all made Alaska essential to the United States and its interests in the Asia-Pacific.

Territorial expansion continued in the later half of the nineteenth century and the U.S. presence in the Pacific extended to include Hawaii and the Philippines. U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan's strategic naval outlook, made most famous in his book, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, heavily swayed U.S. desires to acquire island territory in the Pacific for naval purposes. Mahan explained, that to control the seas, "it is imperative to take possession of such maritime positions as contribute to secure command."⁶ In Hawaii, interests ranged from the American missionary presence to the harbor facilities that Honolulu offered. Economic opportunities in sugar and pineapple markets as well as Hawaii's key strategic position easily persuaded the United States to maintain its presence on the islands. For political and military purposes, the United States saw opportunities in Hawaii. U.S. leadership believed, "annexation would result in political [and economic] stability."⁷

In the Philippines, U.S. interests first focused on missionary and imperialism activities. Eventually, these interests focused on the military and economic advantages the islands offered. The acquisition of the Philippines stemmed from the unexpected outcome of the Spanish-American War. In the end, "the war with Spain annihilated the arguments against imperialism and brought the United States into the world of colonies, oversea markets, and total freedom of the seas."⁸

⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁶ Allan Westcott, ed., *Mahan On Naval Warfare; Selections from the Writings of Rear Admiral Alfred T. Mahan* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company 1943), 286.

⁷ Ralph S. Kuykendall and A. Grove Day, *Hawaii: A History, From Polynesian Kingdom to American State* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1961), 175.

⁸ Claude A. Buss, "Lessons of History," *Pacific Security* (Monterey, CA: U.S. Naval Post Graduate School 1998).

U.S. interests in Japan have seen multiple stages of development as well. Diplomatic relations with modern Japan began with the initial contact by Commodore Matthew Perry and resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Kanagawa. As Japan modernized and its sphere of influence grew in the Asia-Pacific, Japanese and U.S. interests began to conflict. During this period, Washington utilized several diplomatic efforts to try to curb Japanese growth.

The Conference on the Limitation of Armament which took place in Washington, D.C. from November 12, 1921 to February 6, 1922, resulted in a naval treaty between the United States, the British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan. The treaty was an effort to control the naval buildup in the Pacific following World War I. The agreement formally limited several aspects of naval force, including size and number of ships and type of armaments. This conference had a significant impact on powers worldwide, but most important for the Asia-Pacific was the impact on Japanese and the United States' naval forces in the Pacific. The focus for the treaty in the Pacific was to limit the "new order of sea power which had been developing since the initiation of the modern American and Japanese fleets."⁹

The effect the limitations had on Japan and other regional powers' naval strategy was immense. Designed and intended to limit naval capabilities, the treaty actually produced the opposite result. Japanese regional goals and nationalist sentiment eventually led to the development of the East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. The consequence was that "by the 1930s the Japanese not only repudiated the agreement that had restricted their naval deployments, but they sought to exclude the Western powers all together from the region."¹⁰

Diplomatic measures such as the Washington Naval Conference and the economic embargo the United States levied against Japan limited the options for the Japanese. Facing limited diplomatic alternatives and believing that the United States would not retaliate, the Japanese aggressively attacked the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor. They

⁹ Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press 1977), 245.

¹⁰ Michael Yahuda, *The International Politics of the Asia-Pacific, 1945-1995* (New York, NY: Routledge 1996), 2.

quickly learned that they had “grievously underestimated the catastrophic nature of the war they would have to fight after their opening attack.”¹¹ It would take four years and the explosion of two atomic bombs before the war in the Pacific would come to a conclusion.

Following World War II, many countries in the region gained forms of independence and a period of struggle for a balance of power ensued. Territory throughout the Pacific that had been affected by the Japanese--for example, the occupation of the Philippines and the annexation of the Korean Peninsula--was freed from Japanese aggression. These newly liberated areas were heavily influenced by the post-war events in Europe between the rising superpowers. The United States and the Soviet Union quickly moved to establish areas of influence. In retrospect, “the evolution of the region therefore may be seen as beginning with great power arrangements to accommodate the distribution of power within the Asia-Pacific to the global balance of power.”¹²

The Cold War that developed positioned the United States against the Soviet Union in a global struggle. Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s statement that “an iron curtain has descended across the [European] continent” foreshadowed events in East Asia.¹³ The United States’ policy of containment and the line marking vital interests in Asia drawn by Secretary of State Dean Acheson extended from the Aleutian Islands off Alaska down to Japan and Okinawa and then south to the Philippines. South Korea and the island of Taiwan were outside of this defensive perimeter.

This demarcation, combined with the significant reduction in U.S. forces from the Korean peninsula six months earlier, undoubtedly affected the decision by North Korea’s leader Kim Il Sung to invade South Korea. In an attempt to unify the peninsula, in June 1950, the North invaded the South over the 38th parallel.

¹¹ Dudden, 167.

¹² Yahuda, 3.

¹³ Dudden, 192.

Following the invasion, under United Nations (UN) authority, the United States defended South Korea in a limited war. UN forces led by the United States fought against the North Koreans who were supported by China and the Soviet Union. The fighting ended in 1953 after lengthy negotiations that did not end the war, but simply established a cease fire and a demilitarized zone surrounding the armistice line.

Between 1953 and 1960, under the Eisenhower Administration, “the United States continued a policy of containment of communism and confrontation with the Soviet Union.”¹⁴ U.S.-PRC relations remained frozen and tensions rose over the defense of the offshore Taiwanese islands of Quemoy and Matsu. While the fighting had stopped on the Korean Peninsula, the peace proved to only be temporary before warfare began again in Asia, this time in Vietnam.

The Kennedy Administration abandoned the Eisenhower strategy of massive retaliation and instead called for flexible response. This strategy “called for a regional strategy of counterinsurgency to thwart Soviet-backed insurrections in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.”¹⁵ The years leading up to the summer of 1964 were marked by significant increases in American forces in Vietnam and a shift in their mission from advisors to combatants. The naval skirmish of August 1964 off the North Vietnamese coast resulted in Congress passing the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which “became the legal basis Presidents Johnson and Nixon used for the American war in Vietnam.”¹⁶

South Korea’s role in the Vietnam War was instrumental in rebuilding its economy. At the request of President Johnson, Park Chung Hee committed Korean combat troops in exchange for approximately \$1 billion dollars between 1965-70.¹⁷ Thus, “Vietnam became a frontier for Korean enterprise, as many firms, especially

¹⁴ Robert D. Schulzinger, *U.S. Diplomacy Since 1900* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 1998), 232.

¹⁵ Robert W. Love, Jr., *History of the U.S. Navy, 1942-1991* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books 1992), 438.

¹⁶ Schulzinger, 275.

¹⁷ Bruce Cummings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company 1997), 321.

construction companies, got contracts to support the American effort.”¹⁸ Economic growth was a significant ramification from Korea’s involvement in the war.

The period between 1969 and 1976 realized a series of shifts in U.S. foreign policy in Asia. Focusing on reducing the U.S. commitment to Vietnam, the Nixon Administration was able to take advantage of the Sino-Soviet split and attempted to isolate China from Vietnam. U.S. leaders reasoned “that if the North Vietnamese lost their major backers they would make peace on America’s terms.”¹⁹ The early 1970s also brought with it an easing of tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, which resulted in arms limitations treaties.

The beginning of the Carter administration was marked with a new outlook that focused on economic and social problems instead of military security. This approach gave way to a harder cold war stance following the events of the late 1970s. However, the conditions were already in place to lead the way for the election of President Reagan.

The Reagan approach incorporated “an assertive foreign policy that confronted the Soviet Union, communism, and revolution.”²⁰ Under the direction of Navy Secretary John Lehman, U.S. maritime strategy was “predicated on a strong peacetime forward-deployed heavy attack carrier force that could both take the offensive in a general war and provide the president with a quick-draw intervention option in a regional crisis.”²¹ This strategy, and the inability of the Soviet Union to compete in the arms race that ensued, caused the Soviet collapse.

The definitive end of the Cold War in Europe with the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the Soviet Union’s declaration that it would not assist floundering communist governments in the Eastern Block and the collapse of the Soviet Union itself were not mirrored in East Asia. “The situation in the Asia-Pacific...for the duration of the Cold War was more fluid than in Europe where two tightly coordinated military alliance systems confronted each other across clearly defined lines in seemingly implacable

¹⁸ Cummings, 321.

¹⁹ Schulzinger, 296.

²⁰ Ibid., 317.

²¹ Love, Jr., 708.

hostility.”²² Even today, the absence of a formal multinational military alliance in Northeast Asia creates a struggle to maintain a balance of power.

The continuing expansion of NATO and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact has no parallel in Northeast Asia. “Unlike the situation in Europe, there are no effective institutional arrangements that would facilitate collective consideration by the states of the Asia-Pacific” towards security problems in the region.²³ U.S. security interests in East Asia are achieved through bilateral and multilateral agreements with regional partners.

The U.S. policy of containment during the Cold War was based on the region’s bipolar and later tripolar circumstances. The post-Cold War policy of engagement is crucial to ensuring a balance of power and security in the region for the future. The security the United States has provided for its allies and friends in the region has allowed for the explosive economic growth that occurred in the later half of the twentieth century. As the leading naval force in the Pacific, the United States “will continue to exercise global leadership in a manner that reflects its national values, promotes, prosperity and protects the security of the nation.”²⁴

B. STRATEGIC INTERESTS

The U.S. Navy has played an integral role in the strategy and foreign policy of the nation since its inception. “Prior to independence, our fragile colonies clung precariously to the coastlines, drawing sustenance from the sea, and maintained vital trading links to the old world.”²⁵ The Revenue Cutter Service, the precursor to today’s U.S. Coast Guard, and the U.S. Navy have historically focused on providing security for trade and enforcing maritime boundaries along the coast and on the high seas. While the role of the Navy has expanded to include various other tasks, these primary missions are still important today. Along the U.S. coast and around the Pacific Rim, including Northeast Asia, the Pacific fleet conducts multiple operations to ensure U.S. interests are secure.

²² Yahuda, 8.

²³ Yahuda, 9.

²⁴ The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington, D.C: GPO 1999), 49.

²⁵ Office of Naval Intelligence, 1.

The Asia-Pacific region encompasses a vast array of geographic and cultural differences. This immense region bordering the world's largest ocean is home to one third of the world's population. The region contains the world's six largest armed forces. Listed by size they include the following: the Peoples Republic of China, the United States, Russia, India, North Korea, and South Korea.²⁶ In addition, five of the seven worldwide U.S. mutual defense treaties are with countries in the Asia-Pacific region. They include the U.S.-Republic of the Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951, the Australia - New Zealand - U.S. (ANZUS) Agreement of 1951, the U.S.-Republic of Korea Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953, the South East Asia Collective Defense Treaty between the United States, France, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Philippines of 1955, and the U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Treaty of 1960.²⁷

Predictably, “in the last few decades it has become apparent that, in a rapidly shrinking world, relations with the third of humanity that lives in East Asia can directly affect the lives of Westerners.”²⁸ The last three major wars that the United States was involved in during the twentieth century began in the Asia-Pacific region. That “the two major conflicts of the Cold War era were fought in Korea and Vietnam, points to the economic and political importance of the Asia-Pacific to the [former] competing superpowers.” Yahuda continues, “In recent years, the area has emerged as a force in international politics in its own right and has acquired a new self-confidence that has found expression in astonishing economic achievement.”²⁹ The foreign policy and military strategy of the United States will probably continue, over the next century, to shift away from a European focus to one that is centered around Asia.

This transition or “change in emphasis is not being driven by transitory tendencies or passing enthusiasms, but rather by deep, long-term shifts in the global distribution of

²⁶ “U.S. Pacific Command’s Facts,” *US Pacific Command*, 11 February 2002, <<http://www.pacom.mil/about/pacom.htm>> [26 August 2002].

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer, and Albert M. Craig, *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin 1989), 2.

²⁹ Yahuda, I.

wealth and power.”³⁰ Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has stated repeatedly since taking office that the Asia-Pacific region has rapidly growing military and economic significance.³¹

The U.S. goals of promoting peace, sustaining freedom, and encouraging prosperity frame the unique security role of the United States in the world.³² To accomplish these goals, the United States must maintain a strong force in Northeast Asia. Currently the United States “is the only power that has sufficient military capability to deter and defend against an act of aggression that would threaten U.S. and allied interests. U.S. power is critical to assuring that an equilibrium is maintained in the Asia-Pacific region.”³³

The national interests of the United States cover a wide spectrum of issues. The Quadrennial Defense Review Report of September 2001 groups them into three general categories. They are listed as follows:

- Ensuring U.S. security and freedom of action, including:
 - U.S. sovereignty, territorial integrity, and freedom
 - Safety of U.S. citizens at home and abroad
 - Protection of critical U.S. infrastructure
- Honoring international commitments, including:
 - Security and well-being of allies and friends
 - Precluding hostile domination of critical areas, particularly Europe, Northeast Asia, the East Asian littoral, and the Middle East and Southwest Asia
 - Peace and stability in the Western Hemisphere
- Contributing to economic well-being, including:
 - Vitality and productivity of the global economy

³⁰ Aaron L. Friedberg, “Introduction,” in *Strategic Asia: Power and Purpose, 2001-02*, eds., Richard J. Ellings and Aaron L. Friedberg (Seattle, WA: The National Bureau of Asian Research 2001), 1.

³¹ James Dao, “Army to Move Some Weapons Out of Europe,” *The New York Times*, 31 August 2001, A16.

³² Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, (Washington, DC: 2001), 1.

³³ William M Carpenter and David G. Wiencek, “Introduction,” in *Asian Security Handbook 2000*, eds., William M Carpenter and David G. Wiencek (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc. 2000), 9.

- Security of international sea, air, and space, and information lines of communication
- Access to key markets and strategic resources.³⁴

The first tier of national interests encompasses the fundamental concept of guaranteeing U.S. security and freedom of action. The protection of U.S. sovereign territory is essential to maintaining the integrity of the country. This includes using the appropriate forces and capabilities to protect U.S. citizens around the globe. The final leg of this component concerns the protection of U.S. transportation and communication assets around the world.

The second tier of national interests covers the United States' honoring its international commitments. In order to maintain a secure and stable environment the United States must work in conjunction with its allies and friends to preserve a global balance of power. The United States must act to uphold and further its bilateral and multilateral relationships to deter the growth of competitors.

The sustained growth of the global economy is the third essential tier to the interests of the United States. Contributing to economic well-being through enhancing the security of lines of communication and transportation benefits all of the global actors involved in the Pacific region. The principle of promoting prosperity is particularly important for the area. This is especially true since, "figures suggest that the center of gravity of the global economy has already shifted from western to eastern Eurasia, and that, in spite of some recent setbacks, Asia will consolidate its lead in the years immediately ahead."³⁵

The maritime strategy of the United States in the Northern Pacific is tailored to protect and advance all of these interests. The long standing U.S. goal in the Pacific has been to maintain a strategic balance among the significant actors in the region. The U.S. Pacific Fleet accomplishes this by executing missions that include the ability to respond to crises, keep the sea lanes open, deter aggression, provide regional stability, and support

³⁴ Department of Defense, 2.

³⁵ Friedberg, 2.

humanitarian related activities.³⁶ This is clearly evident in the mission statement of the U.S. Pacific Command. It states, that these forces exist “to enhance security and promote peaceful development in the Asia-Pacific region by deterring aggression, responding to crises and fighting to win.”³⁷

C. CURRENT STRATEGY

The events of September 11, 2001 clearly revealed the new security environment with which the United States is confronted. The United States faces fluid and unpredictable geopolitical scenarios. However, recognizable trends can help categorize threats to more easily deal with them in the future. These trends include regional security developments in which Northeast Asia is of particular interest. The strategy of countering regional threats is particularly useful because, “along a broad arc of instability...the region contains a volatile mix of rising and declining regional powers.”³⁸

The Pacific Fleet plays a key role in supporting many U.S. vital national interests. In the Quadrennial Defense Review Report of September 30, 2001, the Secretary of Defense lists the following U.S. strategy:

- Assuring allies and friends of the United States’ steadiness of purpose and its capability to fulfill its security commitments;
- Dissuading adversaries from undertaking programs or operations that could threaten U.S. interests or those of our allies or friends;
- Deterring aggression and coercion by deploying forward the capacity to swiftly defeat attacks and impose severe penalties for aggression on an adversary’s military capability and supporting infrastructure; and
- Decisively defeating any adversary if deterrence fails.

This strategy helps ensure that our national interests are achieved. The President’s national security strategy is focused on engagement with other nations. The national security strategy is carried out first by supporting the U.S. allies and friends throughout the world. It is through this “willingness to use force in its own defense and

³⁶ “U.S. Pacific Command’s Mission,” *US Pacific Command*, 11 February 2002, <http://www.pacom.mil/about/pacom.htm> [26 August 2002].

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Department of Defense, 4.

that of others to advance common goals, [that] the United States demonstrates its resolve and steadiness of purpose.”³⁹

The second element of the U.S. defense strategy involves dissuading future military competition. This process encompasses action that influences “the nature of future military competitions, channels threats in certain directions, and complicates military planning for potential adversaries in the future.”⁴⁰ The third element of this strategy “places emphasis on peacetime forward deterrence in critical areas of the world” to prevent aggression or coercion from any adversary.⁴¹ The final portion of the defense strategy focuses on the capability the United States must possess to support its allies and friends and impose its will to decisively defeat any adversary.⁴²

The U.S. Pacific Fleet plays a significant role in accomplishing each element of this strategy. The strategy of the U.S. Pacific Command states, “The Asia-Pacific region, with economies, people, and sea lanes, is a vital national interest. It contains over half of the world's surface, and sixty percent of its population, largely along its littorals. The confluence of security, economic, and diplomatic interests in the Asia-Pacific requires us to work security issues concurrently. Security provides the foundation for stability, which in turn, yields opportunities for nations to pursue economic prosperity.”⁴³

The White House document “A National Security Strategy for a New Century,” outlines the forward-looking United States approach to national security and encompasses three major objectives. These objectives are clearly the focus of the current policies in Northeast Asia. The core principles are to enhance America’s security, to bolster America’s economic prosperity, and to promote democracy and human rights. The strategy of engagement is a fundamental element in achieving these objectives.

³⁹ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 12.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO 2002), 18.

⁴³ “U.S. Pacific Command’s Strategy,” *US Pacific Command*, 11 February 2002, <http://www.pacom.mil/about/strategy.htm> [26 August 2002].

Engagement in Northeast Asia focuses on the threats and opportunities most relevant to U.S. interests and applies resources where they can make the greatest difference.⁴⁴

The process of countering threats requires three main diplomatic efforts. These are achieved through developing bilateral and multilateral relationships. First, for Northeast Asia, is the continued reinforcement of the U.S. alliances with South Korea and Japan. History has proven that “U.S. alliances, as well as its wide range of bilateral security relationships, are a centerpiece of American security.”⁴⁵ The United States must remain committed to developing and sustaining regional security arrangements. This is why the United States is committed to enhancing security in Northeast Asia by means of a “strong U.S.-ROK defense alliance as a stabilizing pillar for the region.”⁴⁶

Former Commander in Chief of the U.S. Pacific Command Admiral Dennis C. Blair and his primary strategic advisor on the Asia-Pacific, John T. Hanley Jr., stated, “U.S. bilateral treaties and security partnerships, backed by capable, forward-stationed and forward deployed armed forces, remain the indispensable framework for deterring aggression and promoting peaceful development in the region.”⁴⁷

The second issue is maintaining a U.S. forward-based presence in the region. Admiral Blair continued, “as reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula and across the Taiwan Strait progresses, U.S. forward-stationed forces in Japan and South Korea will remain an essential part of a security equilibrium, removing incentives for major strategic realignments or the buildup of independent military capabilities that would raise tensions and spark arms races in the region.”⁴⁸

The third concern is developing multilateral regional institutions. “The defense strategy calls for efforts to strengthen America’s alliances and partnerships and to develop new forms of security cooperation.”⁴⁹ These institutions are vital to the future

⁴⁴ The White House, 3.

⁴⁵ Department of Defense, 5.

⁴⁶ The White House, 35.

⁴⁷ Dennis C. Blair and John T. Hanley, Jr., “From Wheels to Webs: Reconstructing Asia-Pacific Security Arrangements,” *The Washington Quarterly*, 24.1 (2000): 7.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁹ Rumsfeld, 20.

stability in the region. Naval cooperation is a central focus in the region due to the importance of maritime security to Asia-Pacific theater.

While many navies in Asia are in their infancy, the 21st century “will almost certainly see a continuing evolution of the region’s navies toward balanced sea securing capabilities.”⁵⁰ Hence, the fleets the United States cooperates with in the Pacific region utilize varying capabilities to support operations while developing their modern naval forces. This trend will continue in the short term as Asia-Pacific naval fleets grow and adopt modern technology.

All three elements of the current strategy focus on stability in the region which leads to market expansion. Historically, economic growth and continual prosperity have evolved from a foundation of security. U.S. economic objectives in the area consist of four key elements. They are “support for economic reforms and market openings, working with international financial institutions to provide well-targeted economic and technical assistance in support of economic reforms; providing bilateral humanitarian aid and contingency bilateral financial assistance if needed, and urging strong policy actions by Japan and other major economic powers to promote global growth.”⁵¹ The United States is committed to employing these principles in the Republic of Korea to further integrate its economy into the global economy.

D. SUMMARY

The United States historically has had a strong maritime tradition in the Asia-Pacific. Developing in stages since the founding of the United States, the relationship between the United States and countries in the Asia-Pacific region has seen periods of territorial expansion, conflict, containment, and engagement. The U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet’s involvement in the region has focused on maintaining stability through a balance of power to foster economic growth.

⁵⁰ Jan S. Breemer, “Sea Power in the New Century,” in *Sea Power in the New Century: Maritime Operations in Asia-Pacific Beyond 2000*, eds. Jack McCaffrie and Alan Hinge (Canberra, Australia: Australian Defense Studies Center 1998), 11.

⁵¹ The White House, 37.

The immense size of and cultural differences within the Asia-Pacific region cause U.S. interests to span a wide spectrum of issues. Supporting policies in Northeast Asia which ensure security, honor commitments between allies and friends, and contribute to economic growth are the focus of U.S. national interests in the region.

The U.S. strategy supports these interests by assuring allies and friends, dissuading adversaries, deterring aggression and coercion, and when necessary decisively defeating opponents. The strategy of engagement provides the United States the ability to create a foundation of security that allows for economic growth. The United States counters regional threats through reinforcing U.S. alliances with South Korea and Japan, maintaining a U.S. forward based presence, and developing multilateral regional institutions.

III. THE EVOLUTION OF SOUTH KOREAN STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN NORTHEAST ASIA AND CURRENT STRATEGY

A. MARITIME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Bordering the Yellow Sea (West Sea) and the Sea of Japan (East Sea), Korea's geopolitical position between the two great powers of China and Japan has shaped the need for the Korean peninsula to maintain a maritime focus. The peoples that inhabited the peninsula have historically had mixed maritime successes. As a land power with a client relationship with China, Korea traditionally maintained a continental, not a maritime outlook.

However, since the Choson period, Korea's maritime position served an important role in the development of Northeast Asia. Similar to many Western civilizations, the early settlers of the Korean peninsula in the hunter-gatherer stages of development looked to the sea for sustenance. The period of hunting and fishing eventually transitioned to one focused on agriculture. Ultimately, residents on the western shores of the peninsula used the waterways along the coast to trade with their neighbors. Circa 384, "the state of Paekche, cut off by Koguryo from land contact with China, established tributary relations by sea with the southern Chinese dynasty of Eastern Chin."⁵²

During the Silla dynasty (668-918), Commissioner Chang Bo-Go (circa 790-846) was considered the "Maritime King" of East Asia. His strengthening of naval forces, which established stability on the southwest coast of the peninsula, was a direct result of his initiatives to eliminate piracy and the slave trade in the West Sea. South Koreans today revere Commissioner Chang as one of the founders of the nation's seafaring and shipbuilding traditions.⁵³

While vulnerable to water invasion from all sides of the peninsula, the early inhabitants of Korea focused their fortifications more heavily on the threat of land

⁵² Fairbank and others, 282.

⁵³ "Commissioner Chang Bo-Go, the Maritime King of East Asia (790-846)," *The Korean Maritime History*, n.d., www.navy.go.kr [2 September 2002].

invaders from the north. Evidence shows that, “the rulers of Korea placed greater emphasis on the defense of the northern border than on that of the southern coast.”⁵⁴ Due to the land threats from the north and prolonged periods of stability and peace, Koreans have not traditionally needed to recognize the importance of defense from the sea.

Interrupting these historical cycles of isolation and stability, land and waterborne aggressors have repeatedly attacked the Korean peninsula. “Throughout most of its history, Korea has been invaded, influenced, and fought over by its larger neighbors. It has suffered approximately 900 invasions during its 2,000 years of recorded history.”⁵⁵

Korea was under Mongolian occupation from 1231 until the early 14th century and was repeatedly ravaged by Mongol controlled Yuan armies. During the attempted Mongol invasions of Japan in 1274 and 1281, “the Koreans were called upon to build about nine hundred ships and to furnish great quantities of supplies and military contingents.”⁵⁶ These forces were repelled by storms at sea that the Japanese termed divine wind or “kamikaze,” which left Japan free of Mongol rule. The ability of the Korean built ships to survive the typhoons which overwhelmed the fleet, serves as a testament to their skill as shipbuilders.

In the late 1500s, Japanese military ruler Hideyoshi requested Yi dynasty assistance and free passage to attack the Chinese mainland through the Korean peninsula. This request was denied by the Yi dynasty, and Hideyoshi proceeded to attack the Korean peninsula in 1592 and again in 1597. While the Ming government honored its role as a protector and sent troops from China to defend from the north, the main threat to the Japanese came from the Korean naval fleet. This action, led by Admiral Yi Sun-shin, “repeatedly defeated the Japanese naval forces and disrupted their communications with

⁵⁴ Park Yune-hee, *Admiral Yi Sun-Shin and His Turtleboat Armada* (Seoul, Korea: The Hanjin Publishing Company 1978), 66.

⁵⁵ Department of State, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, “History,” *Background Notes-South Korea*, August 1999, <http://www.state.gov/www/background_notes/south_korea_899_bgn.html> [27 August 2002].

⁵⁶ Fairbank and others, 298.

his ‘turtle ships,’ which had decks covered with iron plates and are... the world’s first armored warships.”⁵⁷

Admiral Yi Sun-Shin’s turtle boats and crane formation strategy split the enemy and quickly defeated the Japanese force. The crane formation was an original idea of Admiral Yi’s which entailed striking at the enemy with an organized concave arc in the lead followed by a convex arc. This strategy, in addition to the fact that Hideyoshi was not aware of “the invention of the turtle ships, dealt successive defeats to the numerically superior fleets of Japan.”⁵⁸

Admiral Yi is recognized today as the great figure of Korean naval history. He is noted for his technologically advanced ships which were not only the first armor-clad warships, but had armaments capable of “shooting flying thunder bombs made of gunpowder and iron splinters, [while] laying down a protective smoke screen.”⁵⁹ Admiral Yi’s accomplishments would establish the core upon which anti-Japan Korean nationalism would be based in the early twentieth century.

Korean rulers sought isolation from the outside world in the period that followed. Bruce Cummings explains, “for three centuries after the Japanese invasions of the 1590s, Korea isolated itself from Japan, dealt harshly with errant Westerners washing up on its shores, and kept the Chinese at arm’s length.”⁶⁰ The “Hermit Kingdom” wished nothing more than to retreat inside its shell.

Through the 1860s, Korea “resisted violently all effort to open trade or even negotiate.”⁶¹ This countered the Japanese realization of the need to modernize. The diplomatic relations established between Japan and the West were not paralleled on the Korean peninsula mainly because the Koreans were not ready to open themselves to the outside world.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 316.

⁵⁸ Park, 62.

⁵⁹ Cummings, 76.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 137.

⁶¹ Fairbank and others, 613.

During the 1880s, China attempted to counter Western encroachment utilizing traditional methods. The Japanese, however, were rapidly absorbing Western ideas and quickly modernizing. The Korean peninsula found itself internally divided as “domestic struggles between radical and traditional reformers...reflected the progress of modernization within her two big neighbors.”⁶²

Korea's isolation finally ended when Japan sent warships to forcibly open the country. Converging on the peninsula over the next three decades, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese competition in Northeast Asia led to armed conflict and foreign intervention. The late nineteenth century was a period of intense turbulence on the Korean peninsula. The Japanese eventually established dominance, and formally annexed it in 1910. Korean leadership had failed to listen and heed Admiral Yi Sun-shin's recommendation circa 1592, that “naval force is the best deterrent to prevent invasion by Japanese pirates from the sea.”⁶³

One of the first attempts to open Korea by the United States occurred in 1866. The incident resulted in the death of the crew and the burning of the U.S. merchant vessel, “General Sherman,” in the harbor near Pyongyang. Later, unsuccessful U.S. military attempts were eclipsed by Japan. Patterned after earlier Western unequal treaties with China and Japan, Japan forced Korea open in 1876 through the Treaty of Kanghwa. Six years later, in 1882, the United States was the first Western power to sign a treaty with Korea. U.S. Navy Commodore Shufeldt established relations through an 1882 agreement which granted American citizens “trading rights, extraterritoriality, and most-favored nation treatment.”⁶⁴

The Tonghak rebellion, a peasant-based insurrection led by Koreans who desired modernization and independence, led to Chinese and Japanese intervention on the peninsula. The Sino-Japanese War which ensued resulted with a Japanese victory. Ending the conflict, the Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed in 1895 and established the independence for Korea from China, but Japan's intrusion was far from over.

⁶² Ibid., 614.

⁶³ Park, 71.

⁶⁴ Field, Jr., 4.

The Japanese role in Korea now conflicted with Russian interests. The Russo-Japanese War in 1904 over Manchuria and Korea ended in another Japanese victory. This monumental defeat shocked the world as Russia was the first modern Western power ever defeated by an Asian country. The Treaty of Portsmouth, although viewed by Japan as offering too little, “finally established its domination of the peninsula as a protectorate.”⁶⁵

In the early 1900s, increased domestic factionalism fed on a lack of national unity and created impediments to Korean independence and modernization. This instability led to the Japanese colonization and eventual annexation in 1910. Oppressed under Japanese rule, “the example of the naval hero, [Admiral Yi] though deceased for more than three centuries by that time, remained the only source of hope and encouragement for hundreds and thousands of Korean patriots.”⁶⁶

Japanese rule lasted in Korea from 1910 to the end of World War II in 1945. Celebrated as Korean Independence Day, August 15, 1945 marks the day Korea was liberated from Japanese imperialism. Following World War II, Koreans that were trained and fought under the Japanese as soldiers and sailors eventually became leaders of the new Korean Army and coast guard.

Acknowledging the American ideal of self-determination, but more an expression of Allied uncertainty, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Chiang Kai-shek stated during the Cairo Conference in December 1943, that “in due course Korea shall become free and independent.”⁶⁷ This uncertainty was readily apparent as the end of the war neared.

The Russian declaration of war on Japan in August 1945, brought with it several ramifications on the development of post-war Northeast Asia. Japan’s rapid surrender in contrast to American planning, resulted in the U.S. and Soviet agreement that troops to the north of the 38th parallel would surrender to the Soviets and those to the south would surrender to the Americans. The United States was relatively unprepared for the events

⁶⁵ Fairbank and others, 617.

⁶⁶ Park, 62.

⁶⁷ Fairbank and others, 913.

that followed. James A. Field, Jr. described the American predicament,: “the defeat of Japan was one thing; the simultaneous occupation of key points all along the Asiatic littoral was quite another.”⁶⁸

While the Cold War was in its infancy, the United States and the Soviet Union worked to gain influence and power in Northeast Asia. During this period, the leadership in North and South Korea focused on establishing ground forces to defend their territory. In a repetitive fashion, the Korean peninsula was again focusing on its land forces and paying little attention to the development of its naval fleet. The 1943, U.S. State Department paper which concluded, “a Soviet occupation of Korea would create an entirely new strategic situation in the Far East, and its repercussions within China and Japan might be far reaching” was indeed proving to be true.⁶⁹

The United States post-war reduction in forces at home and the resulting desire for the withdrawal from the Korean peninsula did not foreshadow stability in the region. With the plan of a gradual departure, the United States turned the Korean problem over to the United Nations General Assembly. Though somewhat controversial in its outcome, the United Nations pressed for elections in Korea, but they were only held in South Korea because the Soviet-backed regime in the north would not permit them. In the spring of 1948 Syngman Rhee, was elected president of the Republic of Korea. The Soviet Union held so-called elections in the fall of that same year in the North and declared Kim Il-sung the premier of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Two governments, each claiming its authority over the Korean peninsula, laid the foundation for the volatility that followed. The situation was worsening, “Their ideologies stood as opposite poles, as did their great power sponsors, whose relationship elsewhere continued to deteriorate.”⁷⁰ The possibility of peaceful unification was rapidly diminishing.

⁶⁸ Field, Jr., 15.

⁶⁹ William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1995), 17.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

Tensions continued to build between the two states and exploded with the invasion by the North across the 38th parallel in June of 1950. The United States under UN direction assisted the South Koreans in repelling the aggressors. An amphibious operation from the beginning, the impact of the U.S. Navy and United Nations naval forces was immense.

Luckily, some maritime defense preparations had taken place in the South. Under the direction of then Lieutenant Commander Sohn Won Yil, a Maritime Affairs Association was created on August 21, 1945. This was followed, on November 11 of the same year, by the establishment of the coastal defense force. This date is commemorated as the inauguration day of the ROK Navy.⁷¹

The U.S. Coast Guard had been instrumental in establishing and training South Korean naval forces following World War II. U.S. Coast Guard Captain George McCabe and Korean Coast Guard Officer Lieutenant Commander Sohn established an officer training school in Chinhae, South Korea to train Koreans in coastal maritime defense. Winkler describes this event, “in 1946, Captain McCabe led a small contingent of Coast Guard personnel to train a South Korean coast guard, which was soon converted into the South Korean Navy when war with the North broke out.”⁷²

When North Korea invaded the South, the Republic of Korea ship “Baek Du San” was the only ship in the inventory. A former United States Merchant Marine Academy training ship, it “was purchased by the 7500 officers and men of the South Korean Navy in September 1949, at a cost of \$18,000 and fitted with guns at Pearl Harbor in January 1950.”⁷³

This ship and the others that South Korea acquired primarily played a supporting role to the U.S. and British fleets in the conflict. Under the command of now Admiral Sohn, “the South Korean Navy played a key role in capturing and destroying several of

⁷¹ “The Late Admiral Sohn Won-Yil, The Founder of the ROK Navy (1909-1980),” *The Korean Maritime History*, n.d., www.navy.go.kr [2 September 2002].

⁷² David F. Winkler, “The Birth of the South Korean Navy,” *Sea Power* (Washington, DC: Navy League of the United States 2000), 18.

⁷³ Raymond V.B. Blackman, ed., *Jane’s Fighting Ships 1954-55* (London, England: Jane’s Fighting Ships Publishing Company, Ltd. 1955), 255.

the North Korean vessels carrying supplies for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) ground forces pressing the attack on the Pusan perimeter.”⁷⁴

As chief of naval operations during the Korean War, Admiral Sohn successfully led numerous maritime operations. In June 1953, he was appointed minister of national defense. His legacy includes programs that expanded and modernized the ROK Armed Forces and aided in national reconstruction.⁷⁵

The role naval assets played in offensive and defensive operations, including enforcing the blockade, during the Korean War were crucial to obtaining the limited objectives necessary to win. In the end, “the need of a strong, balanced, and adequate U.S. Navy for controlling the oceans for our purposes and for denying them to an enemy was made elementarily clear.”⁷⁶

Although the fighting ended officially in 1953 with a ceasefire agreement, North and South Korea are still legally at war today. “When the U.S. occupation forces were withdrawn from the Republic of Korea in July 1949, 79 vessels, mainly of U.S. Navy types...were transferred to the Korean Security Forces.”⁷⁷ In March of 1955, the ROK Navy assumed control of its coastal defenses. The years that followed have focused mainly on deterring and defending against aggression from the North, with a recent shift towards regional security.

The ROK naval modernization plan after the Korean War had four distinct phases. The first was the post-war “maintenance” period, which lasted from 1953 to 1965. This period began with the Korean naval inventory consisting only of several small ships, which included frigates, patrol vessels, minesweepers, submarine chasers, auxiliary minelayers, motor torpedo boats, gunboats, patrol boats, landing ships, oilers, oceangoing and harbor tugs, and supply ships. Naval personnel numbered 1,255 officers

⁷⁴ Winkler, 18.

⁷⁵ “The Late Admiral Sohn Won-Yil, The Founder of the ROK Navy (1909-1980).”

⁷⁶ Malcolm W. Cagle and Frank A. Mason, *The Sea War in Korea* (Annapolis, MD: United States Naval Institute 1957), 492.

⁷⁷ Blackman, ed., 255.

and 8,900 enlisted men.⁷⁸ During this period, the ROK Navy “strengthened the functions of support units by establishing shipbuilding depots, supply depots, medical groups, and hospitals.”⁷⁹

At the completion of the maintenance period in 1965, the ROK naval inventory had risen to include a destroyer, frigates, a fast transport, escort vessels, patrol vessels, coastal minesweepers, tank landing ships, a rocket landing ship, medium landing ships, motor torpedo boats, a landing craft repair ship, supply ships, oilers, and tugs. Naval personnel increased to 1,850 officers, 450 midshipmen, and 14,300 enlisted men.⁸⁰

A “build-up of war potential” period followed from 1965-1973. By 1973, the ROK naval inventory had expanded further. It now consisted of seven destroyers, four frigates, six escort transports, 15 patrol vessels, 21 patrol boats, ten coastal minesweepers, eight tank landing ships, 12 medium landing ships, one survey ship, and 13 fleet support ships. Naval personnel numbered 2,400 officers and 16,500 enlisted.⁸¹ This period was marked by the introduction of destroyers to the fleet. Initially utilizing recommissioned U.S. warships, by 1971 the ROK Navy commissioned its first domestically produced destroyer.⁸²

The next period focused on “constructing the foundation for self-reliant national defense” and lasted from 1974 to 1993. In 1986, the Navy was reorganized into three Fleets and in 1987, the Marine Corps was re-established as an independent service. Other significant events during this period include the domestic construction of multiple classes of warships and the participation of the ROK Navy with friendly nations in numerous combined training exercises.⁸³ In 1993, the ROK naval inventory included seven

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ “The Maintenance Period After the War (July 28, 1953-March 3, 1965),” *History of the Korea Navy*, n.d., www.navy.go.kr [2 September 2002].

⁸⁰ Raymond V.B. Blackman, ed., *Jane’s Fighting Ships 1964-65* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Company 1965), 167-170.

⁸¹ John E. Moore, ed., *Jane’s Fighting Ships 1974-1975* (New York, NY: Franklin Watt’s, Inc. 1974), 217.

⁸² “The Build-up of War Potential Period (March 4, 1965-February 24, 1974),” *History of the Korea Navy*, n.d., www.navy.go.kr [2 September 2002].

⁸³ “Constructing the Foundation for Self-reliance National Defense (February 25, 1974-May 25, 1993),” *History of the Korea Navy*, n.d., www.navy.go.kr [2 September 2002].

submarines, nine destroyers, seven frigates, 26 corvettes, 11 fast attack craft-missile, 66 fast attack craft-patrol, one mine hunter, eight minesweepers, seven LSTs, seven LSMs, 16 LCU/LCM, two salvage ships, six tankers, 11 tugs, and seven survey ships. Naval personnel increased to 35,000 sailors of which approximately 5,000 were officers.⁸⁴

The final period lasting from 1994 to present is referred to as the “advanced naval period.” As of 2002, there are eight patrol submarines, 11 midget submarines, eight destroyers, nine frigates, 28 corvettes, five fast attack-missile, 85 fast attack-patrol, seven mine hunters, eight minesweepers, two minelayers, 10 LSTs, three LSMs, 20 LCU/LCM/LCF, and three logistic support ships in the inventory. Naval personnel numbers currently consist of 33,000 regulars of which approximately 4,500 are officers, in addition to 9,000 reservists.⁸⁵

In this current period, the ROK Navy is shifting its focus from coastal defenses toward protecting sea lines of communication which are the lifelines of the Korean economy.⁸⁶ These successive modernization programs and increases in strength of the fleet reflect South Korea’s growing strategic interests in the region.

B. STRATEGIC INTERESTS

South Korea’s historically vulnerable position between China and Japan has caused many people to refer to it as “the shrimp between the whales.” This historical relationship resonates in Northeast Asian politics today. It defines Korea “as a border state for the major powers and a relatively weak power in relation to its immediate neighbors.”⁸⁷

The Korean people’s “experience in a security-scarce region naturally makes balance of power politics the primary template for the Korean strategic mindset.”⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Richard Sharpe, *Jane’s Fighting Ships, 1992-93* (Alexandria, VA: Janes’ Information Group Limited 1992), 365.

⁸⁵ Stephen Saunders, *Jane’s Fighting Ships, 2001-2002* (Alexandria, VA: Janes’ Information Group Limited 2001), 410.

⁸⁶ “The Beginning Period for the Advanced Navy (May 26, 1993~),” *History of the Korea Navy*, n.d., www.navy.go.kr [2 September 2002].

⁸⁷ Victor D. Cha, “South Korea,” in *Asian Security Handbook, 2000* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc. 2000), 279.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 279.

Korea's balance of power approach has historically placed it in bilateral relationships. Seeking stability, Korea has traditionally built its strength through an alliance with a strong power or through an alliance with another power against the strong power.

Korea's strategy and strategic culture is a direct consequence of its geographical position. Korea's "strategic culture is compatible with regional peace and stability."⁸⁹ In general, through political and diplomatic measures, not military might, Korea has managed to maintain its existence by cooperating with its neighbors throughout history. The distances between neighbors are becoming increasingly smaller in the technologically advanced and economically intertwined world.

Northeast Asia "is a geographical arena in which the military programs, intelligence efforts, and diplomatic behavior of the inhabitants are increasingly interdependent."⁹⁰ The growing importance of the maritime theater is becoming progressively more significant because of the number of nations bordering or in the proximity of the Pacific Ocean and its tributaries. Additionally, in the Asia-Pacific region, over 70 percent of the population lives in coastal areas.

South Korea, as a modern member of the Northeast Asian community, finds itself in a maritime environment that is rapidly changing. The region has entered "an era of profound strategic change that is making it particularly hazardous to predict the future."⁹¹ South Korea is changing its strategic interests to include a strong maritime outlook. It is overturning its predominant historic lack of interest in maritime affairs, taking advantage of the geographic and physical characteristics which support the Korean peninsula's wide range of maritime interests. These include defense and economic concerns.

Korea's strategic interests are defined by three national goals. Korea's national security strategy is evolving "towards devising the means to achieve a small, but sound

⁸⁹ Kang Choi, "Korea: A Tradition of Peace—the Danger of War," in *Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific Region*, eds., Ken Booth and Russell Trood (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, Inc. 1999), 107.

⁹⁰ Friedberg, 6.

⁹¹ R. J. Sherwood, "Maritime Developments in the Asia/Pacific Region," in *Issues on Maritime Strategy*, ed., G.A. Cox., (Canberra, Australia: Directorate of Publishing Defence Centre 1994), 55.

and strong nation-state.”⁹² Three significant interests are listed in the ROK’s 2000 Defense White Paper, as follows:

- Korea will uphold its nationhood, seek peaceful unification, and ensure lasting independence under the ideologies of free democracy.
- Korea will protect the freedom and rights of its citizens and create a social welfare system that achieves equality in their standard of living.
- Korea will work to improve its status in the international community in order to put forth dignity as a nation and contribute to world peace.⁹³

The first goal requires the ROK to “establish a firm security posture, which will deter the North’s armed invasion and stimulate reconciliation and cooperation between the two countries.”⁹⁴ The second goal focuses on achieving and sustaining a stable economic system which will allow for the incorporation of the North Korean economy while benefiting both states. The third goal incorporates the idea of increasing diplomatic efforts between the Koreas and the world to resolve the years of conflict on the peninsula in addition to finding new ways for the Koreas to participate in global affairs.

On a still broader scale, the foundations of Korean national security are focused on three conditions. The first is to maintain defenses to ensure territorial integrity, reunify the peninsula peacefully, and support the ideology behind free democracy. The second category is centered around protecting the rights of the people and instilling in them the will to protect their institutions. The third concept encompasses the notion of improving the political and social structures upon which society depends.⁹⁵

Each of these national goals supports the need for the ROK to expand its outlook from focusing largely on defense to focusing on economic growth and prosperity. South Korea’s “Force Improvement Plans (FIP) indicate a gradual shift in focus from traditional

⁹² Cha Young-Koo, “National Security Strategy of South Korea: Looking Toward the 21st Century,” in *Asia in the 21st Century: Evolving Strategic Priorities*, ed., Michael D. Bellows (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press 1994), 81.

⁹³ The Republic of Korea, Ministry of National Defense, Defense White Paper, 2000 (Seoul, Korea: Government Press 2000), 65.

⁹⁴ The Republic of Korea, 65.

⁹⁵ Cha Young-Koo, 72.

ground-based contingencies to regional ones.”⁹⁶ South Korean interests are changing from an inward defensive focus to one which incorporates global economic opportunities.

South Korea’s shifting interests and recognition of the importance of regional sea lines of communication for trade and security purposes have increased the need for naval capabilities. “In the contemporary period, Korea’s rise as a leading trading country and its increasingly significant use of maritime transportation has resulted in a renewed emphasis on the importance of sea power both in terms of its continued economic prosperity and national security.”⁹⁷ Korean naval interests have gradually shifted from coastal defense to having a regional security focus due to the economic importance of the sea.

South Korea has predominantly designed its naval force structure to complement the ROK Army and U.S. forces in defense against the North. Deadly naval confrontations in the Yellow (West) Sea in June of 1999 and again in June of 2002, demonstrate the necessity for this force. The battle, which lasted over twenty minutes, occurred near the Northern Limit Line (NLL) which is the sea boundary that extends out from the DMZ. The June 2002 clash, “left a South Korean patrol boat sunk, with four confirmed dead, one missing, and 20 injured,” and unconfirmed reports indicated, “as many as 30 North Korean sailors were killed by return fire.”⁹⁸ While this incident shows the importance of maintaining coastal defenses today, looking to the future, South Korea is shifting to a more blue water capability.

C. CURRENT STRATEGY

South Korea is continuing to develop as a regional power. “Strategically, it is of the utmost importance to all the nations of the Asia-Pacific to have in place a stable maritime regime.”⁹⁹ To achieve its strategic objectives, South Korea implements numerous policies focused on maintaining security and stability.

⁹⁶ Victor D. Cha, 274.

⁹⁷ Kim Dalchoong and Cho Doug-Woon, eds., “Preface,” in *Korean Sea Power and the Pacific Era* (Seoul, Korea: The Institute of East and West Studies, Yonsei University 1990), v.

⁹⁸ Doug Struck, “North Korea Sends Contradictory Signals: After Naval Clash, Seoul Receives Harsh Words and Congratulations,” *The Washington Post*, July 1, 2002, A12.

⁹⁹ Sherwood, 62.

In the fluid and unpredictable environment of Northeast Asia, there are a number of interests which must be addressed when determining a current strategy. “While the main security threats and challenges to stability are generally agreed to, how they will be resolved or managed is not.”¹⁰⁰

South Korea’s defense objective that “the ROK military will defend the nation from external military threats and invasion, uphold peaceful unification, and contribute to regional stability and world peace” is achieved through the five key points.¹⁰¹ They are listed in the ROK Defense White Paper, 2000, as follows:

- Establishment of a firm defense posture
- Aiming for advanced, high quality national defense
- Devising military policy toward the North and defusing tension on the Korean peninsula
- Improving the ROK-US alliance and strengthening security cooperation with neighboring major powers
- Cultivating an “Armed Forces of the People” that works harmoniously with the people.¹⁰²

Each key point plays an integral role in achieving the national defense objectives of the ROK. The first focuses on making certain the “military is ready to deter the enemy’s armed provocation and ensure total victory in war.”¹⁰³ Simply, the ROK prepares for conflict through education and training of its armed forces. The second encompasses the “the vision or blueprint for the military’s plan for the 21st century and points the way to the successful accomplishment of given tasks and to achieving the overall defense objectives.”¹⁰⁴ In other words, this point concerns the importance of transformation in the strategy of the future.

The third key point centers on minimizing hostilities with North Korea and looking for ways to work towards peaceful unification. The fourth point looks at the

¹⁰⁰ Carpenter and Wiencek, 3.

¹⁰¹ The Republic of Korea, 68.

¹⁰² Ibid., 70-73.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 70.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 71.

ROK-U.S. relationship and its impact on the security and economy of the peninsula. It also includes looking for ways to improve security cooperation through multilateral institutions with neighboring countries. The final point considers the importance of a balanced comprehensive security system between the civilian and military sectors.

Examining the mission of the ROK Navy helps to assess its role in achieving these objectives. The mission statement consists of two elements. First, “the mission of the Navy during peacetime is not only to deter war, but also to protect national and maritime sovereignty, and perform activities that support national foreign policies and enhance national prestige.”¹⁰⁵ As a maritime force defending a peninsula, the Navy must be capable of preventing conflict and defending sovereign territory.

During periods of conflict, the ROK Navy’s mission expands. The “mission during war is to guarantee the safety of activities at sea by protecting the sea lines of communication (SLOC), the lifeline of the country, and by exercising control over the sea.”¹⁰⁶ The wartime mission increases to include safeguarding economic stability while carrying out offensive actions.

The South Korean Navy is organized under the chief of naval operations, currently Admiral Lee Soo Yong, into three operational commands. Rear admirals, as commanders of each individual fleet, report to a vice admiral who is the commander in chief of the fleet. Fleet Headquarters and the Third Fleet are located in Chinhae which is on the southeast coast near Pusan. The First Fleet is located in Donghae which is on the northeast coast near Kangnung and the Second Fleet recently relocated to Pyongtaek, which is on the northwest coast south of Incheon.

In 1978, under the premise of an anticipated U.S. withdrawal from the region a bilateral agreement established the Combined Forces Command. This integrated organization is led by a U.S. four star general with a ROK four star as deputy commander. Integration is apparent throughout the command because all “components are tactically integrated through continuous combined and joint planning, training and

¹⁰⁵ “The Republic of Korea: Approaching the Millennium,” *Naval Forces*, vol. 20, issue 5 (1999): 25.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

exercises.”¹⁰⁷ The alliance relationship with the United States is especially significant to the ROK’s involvement in several of these training exercises.

Training in many warfare dimensions, to include undersea warfare, surface warfare, and air warfare, allows the ROK Navy to practice command of the sea. Joint exercises focusing on multi-threat complex war scenarios have also become an integral part of the fleet’s training regimen. ¹⁰⁸ Ulchi Focus Lens (UFL) is an annual command post exercise that has been practiced since 1976. This combined forces exercise “provides senior commanders and their staffs in the Korean Theater with an advanced training environment for improving their command and control, staff procedures, decision making and warfighting skills.”¹⁰⁹ The ROK Navy participates in numerous ROK-US joint training exercises such as Foal Eagle and Team Spirit.

Multinational training exercises play a significant role in preparing the fleet for conflict. In 1990, the ROK Navy participated in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise for the first time. This biennial exercise incorporates several nations from around the Pacific including countries from North America, South America, Australia, and Northeast and Southeast Asia. Its main focus since 1971 has been to provide the opportunity to enhance cooperation between Pacific allies and promote stability in the region.¹¹⁰

South Korea is an active member in international organizations such as the United Nations (UN). “In August 1991, South Korea joined the United Nations...and since then has been active in most UN specialized agencies and many international forums.”¹¹¹ South Korea’s participation in regional and global organizations is important for stability

¹⁰⁷ “Mission of the ROK-US Combined Forces Command,” *Combined Forces Command*, 8 August 2002, <<http://www.korea.army.mil/cfc.htm>>, [10 September 2002].

¹⁰⁸ “The Republic of Korea: Approaching the Millennium,” 25.

¹⁰⁹ “At Home at Ulchi Focus Lens ’99,” *Air Force News*, 19 August 1999, http://www.af.mil/news/Aug1999/n19990819_991551.html, [10 September 2002].

¹¹⁰ Honorable Ian McLachlan, Minister of Defence, Australia, “RIMPAC Provides the 'Big Picture' Experience for All Concerned,” *RIMPAC 98, The Big Picture Experience*, 1 September 1998, www.pacom.mil/rimpac [3 September 2002].

¹¹¹ Department of State, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, “Foreign Relations,” *Background Notes-South Korea*, September 2001, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2800.htm#foreign>, [10 September 2002].

in Northeast Asia. As the ROK Navy expands and becomes more capable, its ability to participate in regional and international affairs will increase.

Naval modernization programs play an important role in the current and future strategic aims of South Korea. The ROK Navy is rapidly expanding and becoming increasingly sophisticated. “By decades end, the ROK Navy will be a well-balanced, regional naval force.”¹¹² The ROK Navy is aggressively modernizing its fleet by investing in advanced technology that will give it capabilities to operate for extended periods in the open ocean.

The ROK is pursuing modernization programs especially through its submarine and destroyer platforms. The ROK Navy is completing the series of nine Type 209 submarines and three Type 214 class boats with Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) are scheduled to enter service in 2007. These advanced diesel-electric boats will give the ROK Navy an increased range and detection potential in its deterrent capability. The KDX-II destroyer program has increased to include six ships up from the three originally planned. These gas turbine powered, air capable ships equipped with vertical launching missile systems, exponentially improve the ROK Navy’s capabilities. The KDX-III future guided missile destroyer (DDG) program includes up to six platforms displacing approximately 10,000 tons to be commissioned in 2009. Very similar to the U.S. Arleigh Burke class destroyers, KDX-III ships in addition to having the capabilities of the KDX-II will be equipped with phased-array radar systems.¹¹³

The ROK’s decision to use the U.S. designed Lockheed Martin Aegis phased array radar combat system for its KDX-III combat system makes it the fifth navy in the world to do so, behind the United States, Japan, Norway and Spain.¹¹⁴ The choice was based on several factors, most notable being “U.S. guarantees over the release of

¹¹² Keith Shreves, “South Korea’s Navy: Future Regional Force,” *Naval Forces*, vol. 22, issue 6 (2001): 94.

¹¹³ Stephen Saunders, “Foreward,” in *Jane’s Fighting Ships, 2001-2002*, ed., Stephen Saunders (Alexandria, VA: Janes’ Information Group Limited 2001), 85.

¹¹⁴ “South Korea Picks Lockheed Martin Over Thales To Supply Aegis For Destroyers,” *Defense Daily International*, July 26, 2002, 1.

Standard Missile Block IV missiles, which would confer KDX-3 with an area-wide theatre ballistic missile defense capability.”¹¹⁵

Korean President Kim Dae-jung stated, in the spring of 2001, that “in the near future, our navy will have a strategic task force for protecting the national interests and international peace in blue-water scale.”¹¹⁶ This statement accompanied with the recent modernization initiatives confirms the ROK Navy is shifting its defense strategy from a coastal to a regional focus.

D. SUMMARY

The peoples that inhabited the Korean peninsula have historically had mixed maritime successes. While vulnerable to water invasion from the three sides of the peninsula, the early inhabitants of Korea focused their fortifications more heavily on the threat of land invaders from the north. Admiral Yi Sun-shin, the great figure of Korean naval history, repelled the Japanese invasions of the peninsula in the 1590’s due to his invention of the first iron-clad warship.

Korea was able to remain isolated from the outside world until the late nineteenth century. Foreign intervention and armed conflict resulted in Japanese dominance over the peninsula which lasted from its annexation in 1910 through the end of WWII. Following World War II, the fight to gain influence and power over the Korean peninsula erupted in the Korean War. Since the signing of the armistice in Korea, the ROK Navy has focused primarily on coastal defense capabilities. The ROK Navy has predominantly designed its naval force structure to complement the ROK Army and U.S. forces in defense against the North. Naval clashes in the Yellow (West) Sea in June 1999 and again in June 2002 demonstrate the necessity for this capability. As Korea looks towards the future, this strategy is changing as it redirects its outlook to a more regional security focus.

¹¹⁵ Richard Scott, “South Korea Selects AEGIS for KDX-3 Destroyer,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, July 31, 2002.

¹¹⁶ “South Korea Looks To Develop New Fighter, Blue-Water Navy,” *Defense Daily International*, March 23, 2001, 3.

South Korea, as a modern member of the Northeast Asian community, finds itself in a maritime environment that is rapidly changing. Shifting beyond a coastal to a regional mindset, South Korean interests are changing from an inward defensive focus to one which incorporates global economic opportunities. South Korea's changing interests and the recognition of the importance of sea lines of communication for trade and security purposes have increased the need for naval capabilities.

South Korea is developing its role as a regional power. The ROK Navy is rapidly expanding and becoming increasingly sophisticated. Through modernization programs focusing on its destroyer and submarine fleets, South Korea is becoming a well-balanced, blue water naval force.

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IV. UNITED STATES REGIONAL CONCERNS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COOPERATION

The following examines major areas of concern and possible opportunities for cooperation among the major actors in Northeast Asia. The 2000 ROK Defense White Paper notes, “the United States, Japan, China, and Russia constitute the four nations with special interest in and powerful influence over Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula.”¹¹⁷ Organized by country, this chapter examines common themes and how they influence U.S. interests in the region.

A. ROK

Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, the U.S. role as a major influence upon South Korean foreign policy has shifted. As South Korea’s involvement in the international community has grown, U.S. influences have lessened proportionally to other actors. “The post-Cold War environment has provided the ROK with new opportunities to develop international links and to diversify its foreign and defense policies.”¹¹⁸ This relative reduction in power gives rise to new concerns and opportunities between the United States and the major powers in Northeast Asia.

U.S.-ROK concerns focus on ensuring stability in the region for the indefinite future. In accordance with the U.S. policy on the Korean peninsula to reduce tension and deter war, the United States has pursued goals of stability through bilateral alliances with South Korea and Japan. Clearly, “the long-term prosperity of the United States, particularly in light of this globally-connected economy, rests on stability, and particularly on stability within Asia and the Pacific Rim.”¹¹⁹

Security relationships between the United States and other countries in the Asia Pacific region are predominantly bilateral. The lack of a multilateral security alliance in the region presents unique challenges “because what is fundamentally good for one

¹¹⁷ The Republic of Korea, 29.

¹¹⁸ “South Korea, External Affairs, Significant Developments,” *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment-China and Northeast Asia*, 19 July 2002, www.janes.com [9 September 2002].

¹¹⁹ Martin Steele, “Asia and the Pacific Rim,” in *The Role of Naval Forces in 21st Century Operations*, eds., Richard H. Shultz, Jr., and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff Jr. (Washington, DC: Brassey’s 2000), 117.

country may not necessarily be good for the country—or countries—on its immediate borders.”¹²⁰ Stability in the region among the major actors in the future could be achieved through a cooperative security arrangement.

U.S. concerns for the future revolve around its ability to continue to pursue its interests in the region. ROK Navy Commander Kim Duk-ki states, “The United States has shown that the major principles of its Asia-Pacific strategy include forward deployment, overseas bases, and bilateral security arrangements not only to keep regional stability, but also to preserve its interests.”¹²¹ The U.S. goal of continued economic prosperity is intricately linked with the security and stability of Northeast Asia.

Following the Asian economic crisis in 1997, “radical reform measures taken to strengthen the market economy and to improve foreign investment” led to a “substantial expansion in the ROK’s trading and economic ties” worldwide.¹²² U.S. support following the economic crisis came in the form of significant reductions in cost to maintain U.S. troops on the peninsula and by extending time periods to repay debts on military equipment.¹²³

Existing security “problem areas are fueled by the trends in economic and population growth.”¹²⁴ An expanding link has developed between Asian markets and the world. Competition over limited resources and energy is exacerbated by the current population growth. Pressure to continue the economic boom and provide jobs for the increasingly urban population that is predominantly young and male, foreshadows several security issues.

South Korea’s recent approach to the U.S.-ROK alliance has followed a trend shifting from the historically U.S. dominant relationship towards a more equal

¹²⁰ Ibid., 114.

¹²¹ Kim Duk-ki, *Naval Strategy in Northeast Asia, Geo-strategic Goals, Policies, and Prospects* (London, England: Frank Cass Publishers 2000), 98.

¹²² “South Korea, External Affairs, International Relations,” *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment-China and Northeast Asia*, 19 July 2002, www.janes.com [9 September 2002].

¹²³ “South Korea, External Affairs, United States,” *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment- China and Northeast Asia*, 19 July 2002, www.janes.com [9 September 2002].

¹²⁴ Steele, 116.

relationship in a cooperative setting. The Bush administration's initial reluctance for any dialogue with North Korea and its categorization as one of members of the "axis of evil, has strained relations and led to considerable criticism in South Korea of Bush's policy toward the Korean peninsula."¹²⁵

However, the U.S. role in South Korea is valuable to both partners. In an interview in 2002, Admiral Thomas B. Fargo, the commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, stressed the importance of maintaining the capabilities of the U.S. Navy in the region. He stated, "Influencing events ashore requires a forward deployed naval force that continues to be agile, combat-ready and fully capable of leading or participating in joint and coalition operations." Stressing the value of remaining forward deployed, he added, "This means we must be able to establish and sustain a presence wherever needed...whether on the high seas or in a contested littoral zone." In the end, "our ability to command the seas and then influence events ashore is a prerequisite to all follow-on joint and coalition operations."¹²⁶

Due to the flexibility of naval forces, it is likely that the maritime component of the U.S.-ROK alliance will play a greater role as the unification process progresses between the two Koreas. The alliance structure can make arrangements now to cope with the possible ROK defense shift in structure from a ground to maritime foundation. "Government officials in Washington and Seoul state unequivocally that the alliance will remain intact even after the peninsula's security stabilizes. Yet, the ROK exhibits a clear preference for building more autonomous defense capabilities in the future."¹²⁷ These defense capabilities can be used in a cooperative arrangement with other actors in the region to ensure stability.

The United States can prepare now with the ROK to manage the security environment of the future. As South Korea becomes more capable of independently protecting its interests, cooperative relationships will prevent the escalation of animosity

¹²⁵ "South Korea, External Affairs, United States."

¹²⁶ Wolfgang Legien, "Master of More Than 50% of the Earth's Surface," *Naval Forces*, vol. 23, issue 1 (2002): 63.

¹²⁷ Victor D. Cha, 272.

between powers. It is appropriate now “to change the U.S.-ROK security alliance from one which is designed to cope only with the North Korean threat, to one which is designed to maintain and enhance regional stability and peace in Northeast Asia.”¹²⁸

Through a cooperative security framework, the United States can maintain its presence and strengthen its ties with its current allies and friends in the region. A multilateral cooperative security framework “will not only strengthen understanding of mutual security needs but also broaden the definition of security beyond the traditional approach of unilateral defense.”¹²⁹ A series of cooperative security agreements may be necessary to fulfill the need for stability in Northeast Asia.

Unlike common bilateral agreements between countries in the area, cooperative security should focus on “security *with* rather than *against* the adversary.”¹³⁰ Sharing common interests, under a cooperative security arrangement, countries can prepare now to prevent conflict versus preparing for conflict. Working together to achieve common goals in this context, countries in Northeast Asia can build on existing bilateral agreements to realize not only maritime security but broadened objectives. The foundation for a cooperative security arrangement can first be established through naval cooperation. On a broad level, “multinational naval cooperation to maintain international order could be viewed as part of the diplomatic roles of navies.”¹³¹ Naval fleets have the advantage of flexibility and sustainability that offers high political gain at relatively low risk.

Several emerging issues in Northeast Asia establish the need for naval cooperation. One issue covers the rapid economic development that has led to marine pollution. With a non-military focus, this element has the potential to act as a starting point for cooperation. From an economic viewpoint, the region’s sea lines of

¹²⁸ Cha Young-Koo, 86.

¹²⁹ Robert Marabito, “Naval Strategy in Northeast Asia: Geostrategic Goals, Policies, and Prospects,” *Naval War College Review*, (Winter 2001): 166.

¹³⁰ Kim Duk-ki, 3.

¹³¹ Sam Bateman, “Prospects for Naval Cooperation,” in *Sea Power in the New Century: Maritime Operations in Asia-Pacific Beyond 2000*, eds., Jack McCaffrie and Alan Hinge (Canberra, Australia: Australian Defense Studies Center, 1998), 197.

communication and their importance to trade with other nations outside of Northeast Asia are another maritime issue. Maritime stability through cooperative security would benefit all of the involved powers and advance their economic interests.¹³²

The current naval arms build-up is also an issue for the countries in the region. China, Japan, and the ROK are rapidly acquiring modern technologically advanced naval platforms. Two significant events have caused this increase. First is the partial power vacuum left by the Soviet Union's withdrawal. Second, recent economic growth has spurred the need for the traditional naval role of protection of sea routes. Through the creation of a cooperative security arrangement, the need for large fleets can be reduced.¹³³

Regional territorial disputes, which are mainly maritime in nature, are another area of concern. The confidence building measures that could evolve from a cooperative security arrangement may lessen the strain between participants. A final issue encompasses emerging conflicts stemming from offshore natural resources under and above the seafloor. Cooperation between affected countries could also lead to a reduced threat of conflict in this area through open communication regarding needs and interests.¹³⁴ These issues show that "a broader network of cooperative maritime security is essential in Northeast Asia where a host of political, economic, and military factors contribute to an uncertain and changing environment."¹³⁵

The U.S. position as the only superpower and its history of successful bilateral agreements with the ROK and Japan establishes the precedent for the actors in Northeast Asia to permit the United States to take the initiative in assuming the role of security coordinator of the region. As proven in the past, "a primary objective of U.S. security cooperation will be to help allies and friends create favorable balances of military power in critical areas of the world to deter aggression or coercion."¹³⁶ An initial trilateral

¹³² Kim Duk-ki, 12.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Department of Defense, 11.

cooperative agreement between the United States, South Korea, and Japan would serve as a foundation for future expansion.

The arrangement by design should be “agile and adaptable...to posture the United States, allies, and friends to respond effectively to surprises when they occur.”¹³⁷ To ensure continued success the agreement should allow China and Russia to maintain some degree of influence in the region. It is important to balance concerns and interests of each country in the region; for example, Japan’s requirement of maintaining a strong deterrence against a rapidly emerging China must be satisfied. However, this should balance against providing a stable framework for China’s economic growth and political stability.¹³⁸

A cooperative naval security agreement should provide for the ramifications of a unified Korea. For U.S. planners it should be assumed that “the reunification of Korea will most certainly affect the size of the land component of any force [they] keep in Asia.”¹³⁹ Naval forces will become increasingly important as Asian countries push to have American provided security in the region, off the coast or in someone else’s country, but not in theirs.

If the United States establishes a cooperative security environment today, it may ease the transition of U.S. force levels following unification. Relations in the region would remain more stable if the U.S. presence did not completely disappear. Thus, “if a unified Korea was allied with the United States and some U.S. forces remained in Korea, [it is possible] Korea would not feel the need to possess weapons of mass destruction and would allow Japan’s defense capability to remain unchanged.”¹⁴⁰

If a unified Korea emerges as a strong state, the possibility of it continuing to focus on naval development is high. As this transition from a ground foundation to a

¹³⁷ Rumsfeld, 21.

¹³⁸ Center for Naval Analyses and Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, *Naval Cooperation After Korean Unification*, (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analysis 1996), 17.

¹³⁹ Steele, 119.

¹⁴⁰ Robert Odell, ed., *China, the United States, and Japan: Implications for Future U.S. Security Strategy in East Asia Conference Summary* (Alexandria, VA: Center For Naval Analyses 1997), 25.

maritime outlook occurs, the establishment of a greater U.S. naval presence in Korea would increase stability in the new state and ease the transition for the region.

Through the use of cooperative security, historical bilateral animosities can be avoided in the future. Chinese and Russian leaders would have less reason to fear a unified Korea if there were open communications avenues available through cooperative security. The U.S.-Japanese relationship would also be strengthened because of the balancing effect it would have on the region.

B. DPRK

The state of the North Korean's bankrupt economy is "the greatest obstacle to its vision of a socialist state and national security."¹⁴¹ The current trend in the DPRK is to try to maintain a balance between executing reforms in order to receive economic aid and opening itself up to the international community that could lead to the downfall of the regime. The DPRK has found limited success in this endeavor through restricting its amount of cooperation and maintaining a lack of transparency by its threat to act irrationally.

The ravished economic sector in North Korea is a significant impediment to its stability. The 2000 ROK Defense White Paper illustrates the need for change stating that, "A bold open policy and economic reform of the market is needed for the normal development of North Korea's economy and without sweeping changes at a fundamental level, hope for economic recovery is dim."¹⁴² To avoid these necessary sweeping changes, North Korea is looking to external economic support to prolong regime survival.

The ROK views the DPRK as the number one threat to its sovereignty. Constantly raising its level of combat effectiveness, through exercises and continued production of military equipment, the DPRK military is showing little sign of decline. Even following the success of the inter-Korean dialogue in June 2000, "no substantial changes to the internal military activity are visible except for the cessation of the disparaging broadcasts at the demilitarized zone (DMZ)."¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ The Republic of Korea, 43.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 42.

The situation between North and South Korea remains extremely volatile. The DPRK is continuously attempting to increase its military offensive capability through the development of weapons of mass destruction and long range missiles. As a counter to this capability, the United States initiated a policy aimed at curtailing North Korean efforts. During the Clinton administration, the United States attempted to build DPRK confidence through engagement. Shifting towards a de facto two Korea policy, the United States provided “security for both Koreas through stabilization of each regime’s adversarial strategic relationship.”¹⁴⁴ Working through the U.S.-ROK alliance “a form of double containment” resulted.¹⁴⁵

This policy has been met with limited success. However, military conflict is progressively more unlikely to occur, since North Korea does not possess the food, ammunition, or fuel to last beyond the initial attack. In addition, “North Korea today is not in a political or economic position to rationally initiate war against the South.”¹⁴⁶

Despite this situation, repeated incursions from the North continue to occur into the ROK. Due to the construction and deployment of midget submarines for infiltration purposes and no reduction in the number of exercises, there is ample reason for South Korea to be concerned. Recent events such as the remarking of the western Northern Limit Line (NLL) in September 1999, and the “Declaration of Order of Navigation Around Five South Korean Islands on the West Sea” increases apprehension in the South towards the North.¹⁴⁷

The clashes between the North and South Korean Navies are one of the most substantial areas of concern between the two countries. In June 1999, “after several days of maneuvering, South Korean Navy vessels sank a North Korean torpedo boat with at

¹⁴⁴ Edward A. Olsen, “U.S. Security Policy and the Two Koreas,” in *Korea in the 21st Century: Evolving Strategic Priorities*, eds., Seung-Ho Joo and Tae-Hwan Kwak (Huntington, NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc. 2001), 189.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Paul Bracken, *Korea in the 21st Century*, (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses 1996), 4.

¹⁴⁷ The Republic of Korea, 61.

least a dozen men aboard,” after it had crossed over the NLL.¹⁴⁸ This “was the result of the DPRK’s decision to no longer recognize the NLL set by the UN in 1953.”¹⁴⁹

In June 2002, another clash occurred. According to Seoul military officials, “two North Korean Navy gunboats opened fire when they were challenged by two South Korean patrol craft for crossing...an extension of the land boundary between North and South.”¹⁵⁰ Unlike the South Korean victory in June 1999, this clash ended with four South Korean sailors dead, 20 wounded, one missing and the sinking of the vessel. Unconfirmed reports indicated, “as many as 30 North Korean sailors were killed by return fire.”¹⁵¹

Following this most recent incident, South Korean leaders received approval from the defense ministry to “fire on enemy ships after firing warning shots and no longer had to wait to be fired on first.”¹⁵² The event, which resulted in building greater animosity between the two states, also threatened efforts to resume U.S.-DPRK talks. However, approximately one month later in July 2002, “North Korea issued a surprising expression of regret...and called for cabinet-level talks with South Korea.”¹⁵³

Shortly after President Kim Dae-jung entered office in 1998, he announced a new approach to North Korean affairs. Departing from President Kim Young-sam’s policy that did not rule out forceful absorption of the North, Kim Dae-jung proposed a policy of engagement supported by strong deterrence. This approach was labeled the “Sunshine Policy” and focused on separating politics from economic aid and encouraged private sector dealing with the North. In addition, it pledged not to absorb the DPRK through

¹⁴⁸ Don Kirk, “Four Killed as North and South Korean Navy Vessels Trade Fire,” *The New York Times*, 29 June 2002, A5.

¹⁴⁹ “South Korea, External Affairs, North Korea,” *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment- China and Northeast Asia*, 19 July 2002, www.janes.com [9 September 2002].

¹⁵⁰ Doug Struck, “Koreans Accusatory After Boat is Sunk; Tension Threatens Efforts to Resume U.S.-Pyongyang Talks,” *The Washington Post*, 30 June 2002, A18.

¹⁵¹ Doug Struck, “North Korea Sends Contradictory Signals: After Naval Clash, Seoul Receives Harsh Words and Congratulations,” *The Washington Post*, July 1, 2002, A12.

¹⁵² Don Kirk, “World Briefing Asia: South Korea: Navy Can Open Fire,” *The New York Times*, 3 July 2002, 12.

¹⁵³ Don Kirk, “North Korea Regrets Naval Clash With Seoul and Seeks Talks,” *The New York Times*, 26 July 2002, 3.

force. The policy resulted in the first ever meeting of the heads of state of the two countries since the division in 1953.¹⁵⁴

At the time, “the symbolic summit appeared to have succeeded in preparing the ground for increased diplomatic, cultural and economic links, and instigated a more stable and peaceful future for the Korean peninsula and surrounding region.”¹⁵⁵ This spirit of reconciliation has been significantly reduced following tumultuous North Korean relations with the United States. The Bush administration’s hard line stance against North Korea and the inclusion of it as a member of the “axis of evil” does not foreshadow short-term improved relations between the United States and the DPRK.

While there are advantages to the maintenance of stability in the region with two separate Koreas, the eventual unification of the Korean peninsula if handled correctly could establish a greater level of stability. U.S., DPRK, and ROK leaders can plan now for the accommodation of U.S. forces on the peninsula following unification. While there are limited areas for cooperation in the current political structure, the removal of the U.S. relationship after unification is probably remote. The ROK 2000 Defense White Paper clearly states, “Even after unification, it is expected that the alliance will contribute greatly to the security of the Northeast Asian region.”¹⁵⁶ The U.S. role as a mutual ally to both the ROK and Japan is likely to continue well into the future.

C. JAPAN

Japan and Korea have several areas of concern that create foreign relations problems between the two countries. The most significant is their historical relationship. “Korea’s future is of immense strategic importance for Japan, but the Japanese, for reasons of history, cannot easily play an activist, unilateral role there.”¹⁵⁷ Overcoming or working through this impediment is a key factor in improving their relationship in the form of a cooperative security framework.

¹⁵⁴ “South Korea, External Affairs, Assessment,” *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment- China and Northeast Asia*, 19 July 2002, www.janes.com [9 September 2002].

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ The Republic of Korea, 115.

¹⁵⁷ Calder, *Pacific Defense: Arms, Enregy, and America’s Future in Asia* (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1996), 212.

Historical problems beset many elements of the relationship, the most recent of which is the textbook controversy. South Korea resents the sanitized versions with which Japanese authors depict their country's aggression during World War II. Due to these textbook disagreements, in May 2001, the South Korean defense ministry "indefinitely postponed the second joint navy search-and-rescue drill with Japan...saying the exercise should be based on correct understanding of history and overall trust between the two nations."¹⁵⁸

As the two countries move beyond this issue and towards a cooperative relationship, Japan will most likely not take a leadership role in the structure. Because of constitutional constraints and residual animosity from World War II among the countries in Northeast Asia towards Japan, the region would remain more stable if Japan were a participant, but not the controlling party in future cooperative arrangements.

The U.S. presence has historically added to the stability of the region. Analysts suggest, "Japan's strategic position relative to China, the Koreas, and other East Asian neighbors is served by continued U.S. military presence. U.S. presence effectively defuses the power advantage of Japan relative to these nations."¹⁵⁹ The U.S. role in a cooperative security arrangement would continue to serve this purpose and allay regional fears.

Sea lines of communication in Southeast Asia are vital to the economies of nearly all of the countries in Northeast Asia. Providing security for common choke points serves as a prime example of one of the capabilities a cooperative naval security arrangement could provide. Due to the nature of the Japanese economy and the importance of ocean commerce, "the main thrust of Japan's maritime defense effort is likely to continue to remain directed at the creation of an effective protection of shipping."¹⁶⁰ As ROK naval expansion continues, it too will expand its focus towards this mission.

¹⁵⁸ Meeyoung Song, "Japan's History Texts Threaten New Korean Ties," *The Wall Street Journal*, 14 May 2001, B7J.

¹⁵⁹ Odell, 4.

¹⁶⁰ Kim Duk-ki, 188.

The regional institution Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is intended to increase cooperation in the Pacific Rim. The forum functions to build economic cooperation and increase trade and investment liberalization among member nations.¹⁶¹ Preventing a repeat of the Asian economic crisis that began in 1997 and the current Japanese economic stagnation are key concerns for all of the countries in the region. In addition, there is apprehension in Japan regarding the potential of the Korean economy. Fears surround the possible ramifications a strong unified Korean economy may have on Japanese interests.

Japan and South Korea have many common concerns regarding North Korea. Both countries have maintained close ties on this issue, and Seoul has encouraged Tokyo to normalize relations with Pyongyang in the interest of stabilizing the region. In September 2002, Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi met with North Korean leader Kim Jong Il in Pyongyang. The one-day summit, which was the first of its kind between the two states, resulted in North Korea admitting to and apologizing for abducting Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s. North Korea also promised to continue its missile firing moratorium indefinitely and to stop incursions by North Korean ships into Japanese waters. Both leaders announced that normalization talks would resume in October 2002.¹⁶²

The United States supports these talks and welcomes the possibility of diplomatic success that may increase the transparency of the North Korean regime. The United States, Japan, and South Korea have worked closely together to formulate a strategy of how to deal with North Korea. Through the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG), they coordinate the U.S., Japanese and South Korean policy towards North Korea.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ “The United States and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC),” *United States Department of State, International Information Programs*, 6 September 2002, <http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/ea/apec/> [17 September 2002].

¹⁶² Doug Struck, “North Korea Admits It Abducted Japanese,” *The Washington Post*, 18 September 2002, 1.

¹⁶³ “South Korea, External Affairs, Regional Relations,” *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment- China and Northeast Asia*, 19 July 2002, www.janes.com [9 September 2002].

The United States also has an important role in Japanese and South Korean military relations. The United States acts as a buffer to control tensions between the two states. Japanese defense forces are extremely capable and their ability to play a strong role in security of the region is unparalleled by others in Northeast Asia. South Korea is apprehensive about Japanese military capabilities. Japan's significant force allows it to "easily be seen as a military great power in the region based on its conventional naval and air forces alone, despite their largely defensive nature."¹⁶⁴

In the past decade the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) has established itself as a modern technologically advanced fleet. In a cooperative security arrangement, having these forces available to conduct operations would be beneficial to other members. ROK naval modernization goals include eventually possessing capabilities that would establish parity between the ROK Navy and the JMSDF.¹⁶⁵

Former Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Command Admiral Dennis Blair commented on managing security in Northeast Asia stating, "The most effective method is to develop policy coordination, including combined military cooperation, on a particular regional security issue or a series of related security issues."¹⁶⁶ Beginning with naval cooperation today, the framework can be established for security in the region following the eventual unification of Korea.

Moving U.S. bilateral relationships with Japan and South Korea towards a cooperative security arrangement may be seen as a natural progression. "The Japanese-U.S. security alliance has been the most effective vehicle to date for maintaining U.S. military presence in the region and for increasing Japanese responsibility sharing."¹⁶⁷ Creating the structure for cooperation between the three countries can be based on multiple common interests.

Numerous common maritime interests establish this need. "Navies are uniquely suited for multilateral cooperation because of their intrinsic unobtrusive nature as over-

¹⁶⁴ Kim Duk-ki, 8.

¹⁶⁵ Saunders, "Foreward," 85.

¹⁶⁶ Dennis C. Blair and John T. Hanley, Jr., 9.

¹⁶⁷ Kim Duk-ki, 170.

the-horizon security forces, out of public view. Navies also share common cultures and could build on their common traditions.”¹⁶⁸ A relationship beginning in a maritime context is a practical way to stabilize the region.

The U.S.-ROK-Japanese relationship can continue working toward cooperation on three levels. The first level involves continued confidence building measures focusing on building mutual trust. Through communication, personnel exchanges, and port visits, an open, trustful relationship can continue to develop. Second, cooperation for common maritime purposes such as marine pollution, terrorism, piracy, and drug smuggling will increase ties by working together towards common goals. In the distant future, these fundamental measures could lead to an eventual multinational security system. ¹⁶⁹

Cooperative measures are in place today in several of these areas. There has already been naval cooperation between South Korea and Japan. In August 1999, “a joint search-and-rescue exercise by the South Korean navy and the MSDF in the open seas off the Korean island of Cheju” took place.¹⁷⁰ Territorial and resource disputes are mainly maritime in nature, and resolutions to these issues could also be agreed upon through a cooperative context. In addition, recent fisheries accords show the potential for cooperation between the two countries.

Establishing a cooperative framework between the United States, Japan, and South Korea initially and then expanding it to include other countries in Northeast Asia would stabilize the region. The precedent for multilateral cooperation has been set through the successful bilateral agreements between Japan and the United States and between South Korea and the United States. Each country has over fifty years experience working with one another.

The Korea-U.S.-Japan triangle, “if intelligently and sensitively fostered, could play a key role in coping with many of the most dangerous conceivable contingencies in

¹⁶⁸ The Center for Naval Analyses, et al., 3.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁷⁰ C.S. Eliot Kang and Yoshinori Kaseda, “South Korea’s Security Relations with Japan: A View on Current Trend,” in *Korea in the 21st Century*, eds., Seung-Ho Joo and Tae-Hwan Kwak (Huntington, NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc. 2001), 245.

the North Pacific.”¹⁷¹ Under the framework of a cooperative security arrangement, a balance of power will be maintained in the region. This balance of power naturally extends to involve all of the powers in Northeast Asia.

Regional fears--for example, in China--that the United States and Japan may intervene to help Taiwan control the Taiwanese Strait or that Taiwan may be included in the U.S.-led Theater Missile Defense (TMD) project for Northeast Asia, can be reduced through cooperative measures.¹⁷² China’s likely main concerns focus on avoiding conflict and maintaining its influence in the area. By maintaining a balance of power through a cooperative atmosphere, these concerns can be alleviated.

D. PRC

China and the Korean peninsula have a long history. China is using its historical relationship as a premise for its current policies towards the two Koreas and its involvement in the unification process. Currently, China is attempting to balance its relationship between the Koreas. It is “maintaining strong economic ties and improving political and military relations with the South, on the one hand, and giving monetary aid and holding onto the traditional alliance with the North on the other.”¹⁷³ South Korea readily accepts this relationship in an effort to work towards reconciliation with the North.

China’s previously pro-North position has shifted significantly towards the South since normalizing relations in 1992. China’s relationship with North Korea is a concern for the South, but there are several opportunities that exist between South Korea and China. In an attempt to increase military ties, in August 1999 the ROK defense minister went to the PRC, and in January 2000, the PRC defense ministers visited the ROK. ¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Calder, 212.

¹⁷² The Republic of Korea, 27.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 30.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 122.

Some analysts argue that “China will become a major world power, but will retain a regional focus.”¹⁷⁵ Current modernization programs are shifting the traditional strategy of quantity to one focused on quality. A move towards a technologically advanced quick strike force is the present aim. These forces will enable China to easily safeguard its regional interests.

South Korean and Japanese leaders fear the rapid military growth that is taking place in China. “The potential Chinese military expansion and the increasing threat that a growing [naval] power projection capability might pose to the surrounding countries in Northeast Asia could be a real concern by the next century.”¹⁷⁶ Anxieties exist within the region over an impending naval arms race.

Looking to avoid a major arms race, the U.S. goal for the indefinite future will be to maintain a balance of power in the region. As military forces in the region increase in size and lethality, “it is more urgent than ever before to establish multilateral regimes to discipline the unchecked arms race.”¹⁷⁷ Through a cooperative security arrangement, the United States can continue to act to prevent rival powers from developing in the area.

Modernization efforts are rapidly improving Chinese naval capabilities. “Although the navy is still essentially a coastal fleet, its maritime strategy is transforming from a coastal defense force into an offshore fleet capable of defending China’s ocean approaches.”¹⁷⁸ Chinese leaders have shown they are opposed to naval arms control measures that could limit China’s capabilities. Through the use of a cooperative security framework, the United States and other principal actors in the region can progress beyond economic engagement policies with China and begin to address strategic factors that could lead to the prevention of conflicts.

175 U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, *Pacific Security Today: Overcoming the Hurdles*, Conference Report March 24, 1999 (Carlisle, PA:U.S. Army War College 1999), 10.

176 Kim Duk-ki, 7.

177 You Ji, “The Chinese Navy and National Interest,” in *Sea Power in the New Century: Maritime Operations in Asia-Pacific Beyond 2000*, eds., Jack McCaffrie and Alan Hinge (Canberra: Australia: Australian Defense Studies Center 1998), 32.

178 Kim Duk-ki, 156.

The United States and China have mutual concerns about each other's role in the Asia-Pacific. In the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review Report, the ambiguous statement that, "the possibility exists that a military competitor with a formidable resource base will emerge in the region," alludes to U.S. apprehension about Chinese objectives.¹⁷⁹ China not only fears the U.S. role in Northeast Asia, but it is also skeptical about U.S. ambitions with respect to South Korea and Japan. "China is wary of Japan's joint endeavors with the United States because of their threat to the balance of power in Northeast Asia."¹⁸⁰

The United States must be cautious about Chinese apprehension and the ramifications that they may create. The uncertainty surrounding a missile defense system is one example. While Japan understands U.S. objectives and interests in developing a missile defense capability in Northeast Asia, it has not approved the deployment of such a system. Conversely, South Korean and Chinese ties have strengthened due to the ROK's intent not to participate in a U.S.-led missile defense program.

One alternative to alleviate some of this insecurity could focus on building a cooperative security structure that begins with Japan and South Korea and eventually expands to include China. Security would be enhanced through the stability that could result. "Unless patterns of security cooperation and combined military activity are established and nourished, there is a danger of unilateral and bilateral actions raising tensions and rivalries in the region, which could risk conflict and inhibit peaceful development."¹⁸¹

Cooperative naval security missions should be humanitarian not military in nature in the beginning, thus having potential to help China. China may be concerned initially for several reasons. Three significant issues include the following:

- A U.S. dominated international security-related arrangement may interfere with China's aspirations to become the dominant power in the region.
- Cooperation might interfere with China's ability to recover Taiwan or defend its coastline.

¹⁷⁹ Department of Defense, 4.

¹⁸⁰ The Republic of Korea, 29.

¹⁸¹ Dennis C. Blair and John T. Hanley, Jr., 16.

- China is opposed to any military cooperation that enhances the military power of other regional states.¹⁸²

Each concern must be addressed to lessen Chinese fears. One way to approach these problems is to establish an open relationship and plan for the eventual inclusion of China in the cooperative security structure.

China is an active player in the Korean reunification process and seeks peaceful unification through dialogue and negotiations. By balancing its ties with North and South Korea, China hopes to help shape the reconciliation process and prevent an outcome that makes the United States dominate. Following unification, China desires to avoid having a significant U.S. presence on the Korean peninsula at its border.

The recent relaxation between Chinese and Russian leaders, largely due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, has had a positive effect on Sino-Russian relations. Strategic relations between Beijing and Moscow are focusing on strengthening cooperation through broad common interests. Arms sales and the transfer of military technology are examples of some of the basis on which this relationship prospers.

E. RUSSIA

The Soviet Union and South Korea normalized relations in 1990. These diplomatic ties established the foundation for the strong relationship that exists today. Strong links grew through the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and by September 1995 Moscow annulled its 1961 friendship treaty with Pyongyang. Today, hoping to act as a balancing force between powers in the region, Russia is looking to revive its “past glories via new military diplomacy, with a special eye on Northeast Asia.”¹⁸³

While Russia has historically been, and continues to be, primarily focused on European security issues, it is naturally concerned with stability in Northeast Asia due to its proximity to each of the major actors in the region. Russian interest in the Asia-Pacific area focuses substantially on perceived economic opportunities. Russian leaders see strengthened trade possibilities through rail and pipeline development that could open

¹⁸² The Center for Naval Analyses, et al., 20.

markets and grant access to sea lines of communication in Northeast Asia. Abundant raw materials in Russia provide exceptional potential for use in Japanese and Korean industries.

Extensive Russian debt has significantly influenced its relationship with South Korea. Due to economic necessity, South Korea has been faced with seeking repayment through military hardware and technology transfers. This trade has been so substantial that “by the end of the 1990s, Moscow emerged as Seoul’s second most important military partner after Washington.”¹⁸⁴

U.S. objections to Russian-ROK arms sales are based on two main issues. First is the lack of interoperability between Russian and U.S. weapons. Second are concerns about reliability to continue supplying weapons in the future. Despite these concerns, South Korean officials see the situation as an opportunity not only to receive payment on the debt but also to gain knowledge about the capabilities of North Korea, since it predominantly possesses Russian made equipment. In addition, “unlike other suppliers of high-tech weapons Russia is willing to transfer ‘core’ technologies and components.”¹⁸⁵ With this knowledge base, South Korea gains the capability to develop advanced weapon systems.

Similar to other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, Russia is also transforming its forces. Currently, “massive efforts to modernize the Navy are under way to reverse the trend of deterioration over the past ten years.”¹⁸⁶ Funding for these improvements is largely derived from arms exports. Russia exports military products not only to South Korea, but also to China. Chinese-Russian arms transactions are of great concern to other states due to the potential effects on the balance of power in the region.

The collapse of the Soviet Union significantly altered the balance of power structure in Northeast Asia. Serious economic issues and internal instability have

¹⁸³ The Republic of Korea, 27.

¹⁸⁴ Tae-Hwan Kwak and Seung-Ho Joo, “Security Relations Between the ROK and Russia: The Military Dimension,” in *Korea in the 21st Century*, eds., Seung-Ho Joo and Tae-Hwan Kwak (Huntington, New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc. 2001), 195.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 212.

¹⁸⁶ The Republic of Korea, 40.

changed the security objectives of the Russian Federation. Long-term maritime security objectives center around remaining involved in regional security with minimal costs. Through a cooperative security arrangement this goal can be realized.

There is already a limited foundation for cooperation between South Korea and Russia. In 1994, an “Agreement on the Prevention of Incidents at Sea beyond Territorial Waters” was drafted and its implementation is currently being discussed. Korean naval officials announced in April 2002 that “South Korea and Russia will hold their first joint maritime search and rescue drill later this year in a sign of growing military cooperation between the two nations.”¹⁸⁷ In addition, personnel exchanges and meetings between military officials continue to become more frequent.

Through military dialogue and peaceful exercises, confidence is built between the participants. “If the armed forces of the region tailored military capabilities and conducted exercises in ways that increased transparency and warning times, raised thresholds for military action, and supported peaceful solutions over time” regional security would be enhanced.¹⁸⁸ A cooperative security structure could achieve this objective.

Russia is interested in the peaceful unification of the Korean peninsula. Its interest in this process is evident through its attempts to act as an “honest broker” between the two Koreas. Its involvement in potential expanded six-party talks--which would include the United States, South Korea, Japan, China, North Korea, and Russia--also stresses Russian interest in maintaining a role in the outcome. North Korea’s debt towards Russia is a significant factor for Russian interest in the unification process. The peaceful reunification of the peninsula is important to ensuring a united Korea will assume this debt.

F. SUMMARY

Several common themes emerge when assessing U.S. regional concerns and opportunities for cooperation in Northeast Asia. U.S.-ROK concerns focus on ensuring

¹⁸⁷ “Korea, Russia Plan 1st Joint Navy Drill,” *Korea Herald*, 23 April 2002.

¹⁸⁸ Dennis C. Blair and John T. Hanley, Jr., 13.

stability in the region for the indefinite future. This stability has historically been a product of successful bilateral security alliances with Japan and South Korea. As the unification process on the Korean peninsula progresses it is likely that the maritime component of the U.S.-ROK alliance will play a greater role.

Through a naval cooperative security framework, the United States can maintain its presence and strengthen its ties with its current allies and friends in the region. Each country in Northeast Asia would benefit from this arrangement. As the DPRK continues to reform its economy and open itself to the international community, its role in a cooperative security organization will ease tensions in the area. Two significant concerns between the ROK and Japan center on Japanese interpretations of history and the effect a strong unified Korean economy could have on a troubled Japanese economy. Previous joint humanitarian maritime operations are a starting point for developing a cooperative security framework.

Chinese and Russian common economic and military interests affect all of the regional powers in Northeast Asia. It is important to plan for the eventual inclusion of China and Russia in a cooperative security framework. A security agreement working to prevent conflict versus one that prepares for conflict would benefit all of the actors in the region.

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VI. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

A. REVIEW OF US AND ROK STRATEGIES

The United States historically has had a strong maritime tradition in the Asia-Pacific. Developing in stages since the founding of the United States, the relationship between the United States and countries in the Asia-Pacific region has seen periods of territorial expansion, conflict, containment, and engagement. The U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet's involvement in the region has focused on maintaining stability through a balance of power to foster economic growth.

The immense size of and cultural differences within the Asia-Pacific region cause U.S. interests to span a wide spectrum of issues. Supporting policies in Northeast Asia which ensure security, honor commitments between allies and friends, and contribute to economic growth are the focus of U.S. national interests in the region.

The U.S. strategy supports these interests by assuring allies and friends, dissuading adversaries, deterring aggression and coercion, and when necessary decisively defeating opponents. The strategy of engagement provides the United States the ability to create a foundation of security that allows for economic growth. The United States counters regional threats through reinforcing U.S. alliances with South Korea and Japan, maintaining a U.S. forward based presence, and developing multilateral regional institutions.

The peoples that inhabited the Korean peninsula have historically had mixed maritime successes. While vulnerable to water invasion from the three sides of the peninsula, the early inhabitants of Korea focused their fortifications more heavily on the threat of land invaders from the north. Admiral Yi Sun-shin, the great figure of Korean naval history, repelled the Japanese invasions of the peninsula in the 1590's due to his invention of the first iron-clad warship.

Korea was able to remain isolated from the outside world until the late nineteenth century. Foreign intervention and armed conflict resulted in Japanese dominance over the peninsula which lasted from its annexation in 1910 through the end of WWII.

Following World War II, the fight to gain influence and power over the Korean peninsula erupted in the Korean War. Since the signing of the armistice in Korea, the ROK Navy has focused primarily on coastal defense capabilities. The ROK Navy has predominantly designed its naval force structure to complement the ROK Army and U.S. forces in defense against the North. Naval clashes in the Yellow (West) Sea in June 1999 and again in June 2002 demonstrate the necessity for this capability. As Korea looks towards the future, this strategy is changing as it redirects its outlook to a more regional security focus.

South Korea, as a modern member of the Northeast Asian community, finds itself in a maritime environment that is rapidly changing. Shifting beyond a coastal to a regional mindset, South Korean interests are changing from an inward defensive focus to one which incorporates global economic opportunities. South Korea's changing interests and the recognition of the importance of sea lines of communication for trade and security purposes have increased the need for naval capabilities.

South Korea is developing its role as a regional power. The ROK Navy is rapidly expanding and becoming increasingly sophisticated. Through modernization programs focusing on its destroyer and submarine fleets, South Korea is becoming a well-balanced, blue water naval force.

B. POSSIBLE FUTURE SCENARIOS

One possible future scenario for the Korean peninsula is all-out war. This scenario is highly unlikely because, "North Korea today is not in a political or economic position to rationally initiate war against the south."¹⁸⁹ North Korea does not possess the food, ammunition, or fuel to last beyond the initial attack. These problems will continue to grow over time, but the U.S.-ROK alliance must be prepared for possible irrational behavior from the DPRK. Former Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command, Admiral Dennis C. Blair, stated in October 2001, that "If North Korea attacks, they will have started the last Korean War."¹⁹⁰ The strength of the U.S. and the ROK forces in

¹⁸⁹ Bracken, 4.

¹⁹⁰ Dennis C. Blair, "Remarks at the Naval Postgraduate School Monterey California," *U.S. Pacific Command Speeches*, October 16, 2001, <http://131.84.1.218/speeches/sst2001/011022postgrad.htm>, September 15, 2002.

place to defend the peninsula will most likely act as a strong enough deterrent to prevent the North from invading the South again.

At the other end of the scale is the possibility of an economic or political collapse in the DPRK. An implosion of this magnitude could create a mass refugee exodus towards South Korea and China. The chaos and disorder that would likely ensue would create a very weak unified Korea. The financial burden that is likely to follow from this scenario would have severe ramifications on the stability of Northeast Asia. Further problems, in this scenario, revolve around the possibilities that China may move to support the North to prevent a dominant U.S. presence on the peninsula. This scenario is one that Seoul and Washington should continue to work to avoid.

The most likely scenario is for continued gradual unification to occur. In a four plus two context, involving the U.S., the ROK, Japan, China, the DPRK, and Russia, each power and its interests in Northeast Asia are represented. To ensure maintained stability, “a gradual process of unification in which neither side is swallowed up by the other and the United States helps North Korea to achieve a China-style economy” in the best interest of the United States.¹⁹¹ The United States must approach Chinese intervention cautiously to avoid a unified outcome that is guided dominantly by its interests.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is in everyone’s best interest for the United States to remain forward deployed in Northeast Asia. Even as relations between North and South Korea improve, the United States must convey the importance of its balancing role in the region. Losing the strategic location of bases in Northeast Asia would critically damage the balance of power in the region. Alternative bases in Australia are too geographically separated from the area, and alternatives in Singapore or Guam, while also geographically separated, leave few options for expansion due to their size.

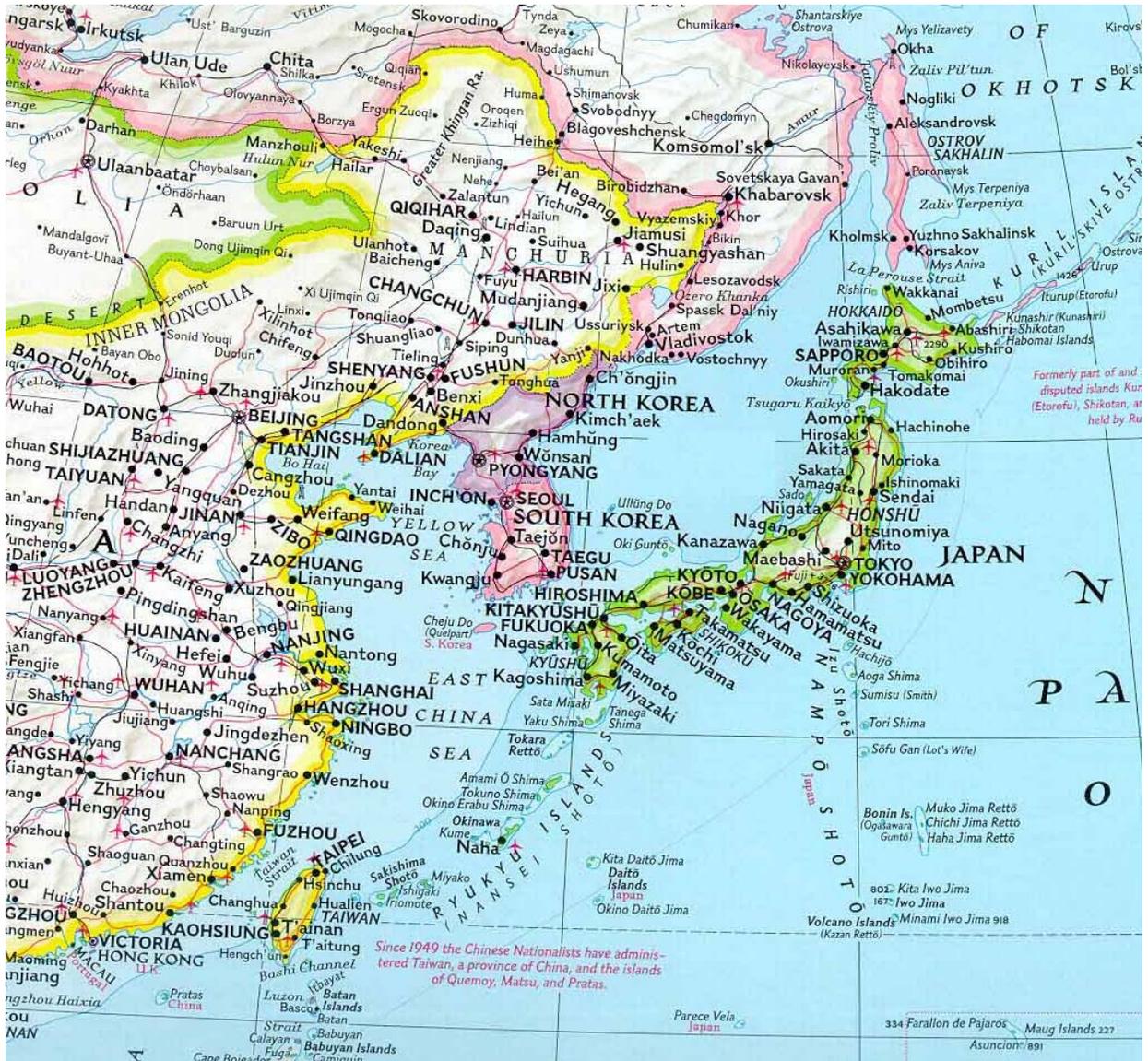
¹⁹¹ Quansheng Zhao, “China’s Security Concerns over the Korea Peninsula,” in *Korea in the 21st Century*, eds., Seung-Ho Joo and Tae-Hwan Kwak (Huntington, NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc. 2001), 231.

“The United States is viewed by countries throughout the Asia and Pacific region as the stabilizing factor in what they all consider to be a very uncertain area.”¹⁹² The ability of the United States to remain in East Asia and provide security for the region is critical to the stability of the volatile region. “The capability and presence of U.S. forces, especially naval forces, is the cornerstone of this security.”¹⁹³ Through a cooperative security framework tensions can be reduced among the major actors in the region and increased economic growth can be realized through the stability that it could provide.

¹⁹² Steele, 119.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 120.

APPENDIX A: MAP OF NORTHEAST ASIA.



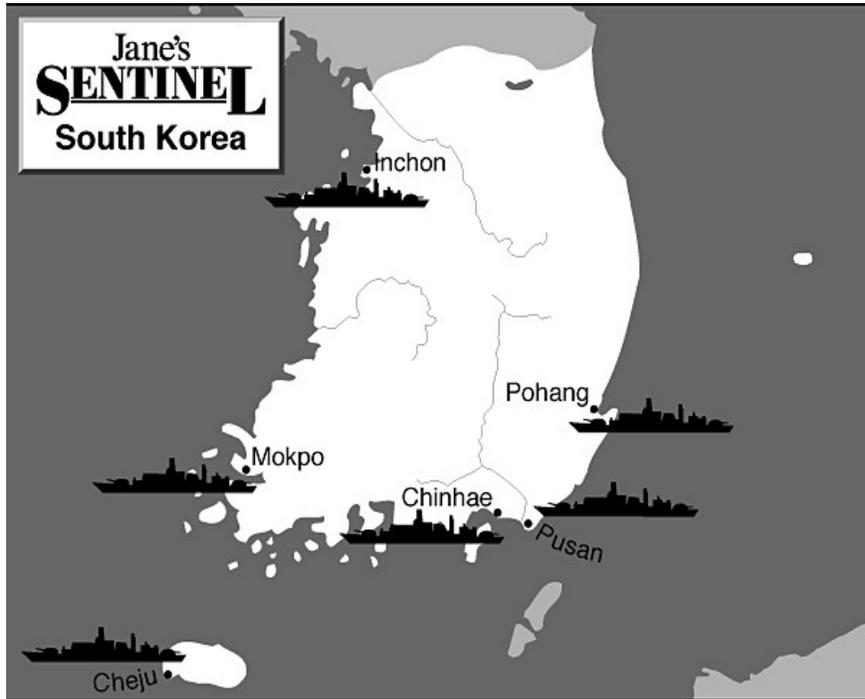
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APPENDIX B: UNITED STATES PACIFIC COMMAND AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY



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APPENDIX C: MAP OF REPUBLIC OF KOREA NAVAL BASES



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